THE TRIAL OF THE 49ERS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE KURDISH MOVEMENT

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MUSTAFA SEYİT KORKMAZ

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THE TRIAL OF THE 49ERS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE KURDISH MOVEMENT

Mustafa Seyit Korkmaz
122671011

Prof. Dr. Bülent Bilmez
İstanbul Bilgi University

Assist. Prof. Dr. Murat Dağlı
İstanbul Bilgi University

Prof. Dr. Serdar Şengül
Kırşehir Ahi Evran University

Date of Approval: 6/25/2025

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Name Surname: Mustafa Seyit Korkmaz

Signature:

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the trial of the 49ers, in which 50 Kurds from different backgrounds and classes, such as students, lawyers, journalists, and ranked soldiers, were arrested on December 17, 1959, on charges of espionage, separatism, and undermining national sentiments, and prosecuted with demands for the death penalty. The trial was shaped by several regional and global developments, including the return of Barzani to Iraq after the 1958 revolution, the rise of postcolonial movements worldwide, and the internal political turmoil in Türkiye. Even though almost all the 49ers were released by 1961 after spending a year in prison, the legal process continued for a decade. This case was the first trial on charges of Kurdish nationalism since the prosecutions that followed the suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in 1938. Several imprisoned individuals would later play pioneering roles in both the leftist and nationalist wings of the Kurdish movement that gained momentum in the 1960s and onward.

Keywords: Türkiye; Nationalism; Kurdism; Postcolonialism; Political Trial

ÖZ

Bu tez, 17 Aralık 1959 tarihinde öğrenciler, avukatlar, gazeteciler ve rütbeli askerler gibi çeşitli mesleklerden 50 Kürt'ün; casusluk, bölücülük ve millî duyguları zayıflatma suçlamalarıyla tutuklandığı ve idam istemiyle yargılandığı 49'lar Davası'na odaklanmaktadır. Dava, 1958 Devrimi'nin ardından Barzani'nin Irak'a dönüşü, dünya genelinde yükselen sömürgecilik karşıtı hareketler ve Türkiye'nin yaşadığı iç siyasi bunalım gibi çeşitli bölgesel ve küresel gelişmelerin etkisiyle şekillenmiştir. 49'lar yaklaşık bir yılın ardından 1961 yılında serbest bırakılmış olsalar da dava süreci yaklaşık on yıl daha devam etmiştir. Bu dava, 1938'de bastırılan Dersim İsyanı'nın ardından Kürt milliyetçiliği suçlamasıyla açılan ilk davadır. Tutuklanan bazı isimler, 1960'larda yükselişe geçen Kürt hareketinin hem solcu hem de milliyetçi kanatlarında öncü roller üstlenmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye; Milliyetçilik; Kürtçülük; Postkolonyalizm; Siyasi Dava

To Zuhal and Yunus.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CENTO:	The Central Treaty Organization, the Baghdad Pact
CUP:	The Committee of Union and Progress
DDKO:	Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths
DP:	Democratic Party
ICP:	Iraqi Communist Party
ISA:	Iraqi Student Association
IUS:	The International Union of Students
JP:	Justice Party
KDP:	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDPinT:	Kurdistan Democratic Party in Türkiye (Kırmızıtoprak faction)
KMAPS:	Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress Society
KSSE:	The Kurdish Students' Society in Europe
LP:	The Liberty Party
MAH:	National Police Services Organization
NSP:	National Salvation Party
NTP:	New Türkiye Party
PRP:	People's Republican Party
RNP:	Republican Nation Party
SPK:	Socialist Party of Kurdistan (Burkay faction)
SRK:	Society for the Rise of Kurdistan
TKDP:	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Türkiye
TLP:	Turkish Labor Party
WFDY:	World Federation of Democratic Youth

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This research examines the Trial of the 49ers, a milestone in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism in post-World War II Türkiye. Nationalism theories here help to understand the event's importance and create a theoretical and conceptual framework.

Ernest Gellner's argues that nationalism is a structural product of modern industrial society. Gellner observes that in agrarian societies, individuals rarely engaged directly with the state, relying instead on intermediaries like clerics or local notables (Gellner, 1983, p. 10). The new regime in Türkiye, however, deliberately dismantled these intermediaries in Kurdish regions, replacing them with a centralized state apparatus headed from Ankara. Through education policies and modernization projects, Kurdish youth, particularly from the 1940s onward, attended Western-style high schools and universities in Ankara and Istanbul. Unlike the previous Kurdish elite who were trained in tribal settings based on religious curriculum, this new generation of Kurds encountered the Turkish national discourse that denies their existence firsthand through an apparatus of state, schools.

This novelty, young Kurdish students immersed in Turkish educational institutions, created the socio-cultural space for nationalism to emerge, in Gellner's terms, as the cultural homogenization demanded by industrial modernity (Gellner, 1983, p. 24). Nationalist ideologies flourished among the Ottoman Empire's nations in the nineteenth century. One key element of such a rise is the influence of a new generation that traveled to Europe for modern education. Referred to as the "Young Turks" by Turks or "Zartonk" by Armenians, these groups of people returned home infused with the prevailing ideologies of their era that embraced the slogan "liberté, égalité, fraternité" (Stokes, 2009,

pp. 55-6).[1] Kurdish students no longer had to move to Europe to be exposed to modern ideologies; they were now experiencing it at the very core of the Republican project. The symbolic importance of their location, Istanbul and Ankara, is not incidental. These cities became inadvertent incubators of Kurdish political dissent despite being epicenters of Turkish modernization. Just as Namık Kemal and other Ottoman reformists imported nationalist ideas from Paris in the nineteenth century, these young Kurds reimagined their national identity in their own country. In this context, modern education became a double-edged sword for the Turkish state; while designed to assimilate and homogenize for the sake of industrial modernity, it also equipped Kurdish students with cognitive and ideological weapons to question the legitimacy of the official nationalist narrative over time.

While examining Sub-Saharan Africa, Baskın Oran classifies nationalism into three interlinked stages: first, as sentiment; second, as an ideological instrument of elite cohesion; and third, as the agenda of organized social movements (Oran, 1997, p. 35). According to Oran, the first phase corresponds to a "we-consciousness" intrinsic to the nature of human communities. Even when this positive dynamic is accompanied by a negative "they-consciousness," it does not yet amount to nationalism, but rather constitutes a rudimentary form of protest. In this sense, the 49ers constitute Oran's first stage in the Kurdish movement in Türkiye. Their nationalism was a sentiment of solidarity as they lived far from their hometowns. Their arrest and trial were not merely punitive; they served as a response to a perceived existential threat by the state: the reemergence of a Kurdish national consciousness that was taken out of the equation by

[1] In his comprehensive thesis, Bajalan argues that the intellectuals and notables who published the *Kurdistan* journal in 1898 and formed the first Kurdish clubs and organizations invented images and symbols related to Kurdish nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, he calls them the Jeune Kurds (Bajalan, 2009, p. 66). I believe that there was a rupture between generations because of the extraordinary state repression between 1925 and 1939. In this sense, while the Kurdistan newspaper generation represents the discourse fathers of Jeune Kurds, the 49ers emerged as the activist Jeune Kurds of Kemalist Türkiye.

the republican policies between 1925 and 1939.[2] Ultimately, the 49ers evolved into a form of resistance as a result of the state's response, embodying both nationalist and socialist elements, against the very system that had shaped their existence and thereby paved the way for Oran's second stage in the 1960s and the 70s.

Miroslav Hroch's three-phase model further clarifies the political trajectory of the 49ers. In Hroch's Phase A, isolated intellectuals conduct research on national history and language; in Phase B, political activists begin to disseminate these ideas to a broader audience; and in Phase C, culminating in mass mobilization and often state confrontation (Hroch, 1999, p. 81). The 49ers symbolize the step forward from Phases A to B. They were heavily influenced by emerging anti-colonial movements globally. Their arrest laid the ideological groundwork for a collective national identity. They were not yet mass mobilizers, but their very formation as a coherent group in prison represents Hroch's second stage, which is translating cultural identity into political potential.

Mesut Yeğen is a well-known academic who extensively studies the Kurdish question in Türkiye. In his article on the Kurdish question in the Turkish state discourse, he makes a Foucaudian analysis of the republican narrative while referring to its roots in the 19th century and the Turkish War of Independence years. He says, "When the Kurdish question was reconstituted as a question of political reaction, tribal resistance, regional backwardness, what happened was an enunciation of the attack of the Turkish state on the social space wherein Kurdishness was constituted/realized" (Yeğen, 1999, p. 568). According to Yeğen, the Turkish state discourse reconstituted the problem "regional backwardness" in the wake of economic consolidation in the 1950s.

Most of the 49ers were the generation that went to universities in the late 1950s. The state propaganda they were exposed to in the college classes was the socio-economic conditions of the "East" that intertwined with pre-modernity and banditry. The political atmosphere in WWII, dominated by socialist and/or socially-nationalist, economically-

[2] As Republican-era policies prevented continuity between the discursive and the activist Jeune Kurds, the concept of reemergence seems fitting for understanding the 49ers' role in reviving the suppressed Kurdish intellectual and political mobilization.

liberal anti-colonialist movements worldwide, gave these Kurdish youth an answer to the "economic development" problem while arming them with a counterfactual discourse in reaction to the Turkish state narrative.

As it is said, the ideological climate of the mid-20th century also had a huge impact on the 49ers. Frantz Fanon's depiction of post-colonial nationalism as a vehicle for both cultural and socio-economic liberation offers a persuasive perspective:

> "All the jacqueries and desperate deeds, all those bands armed with cutlasses or axes find their nationality in the implacable struggle which opposes socialism and capitalism. (…) Strengthened by the unconditional support of the socialist countries, the colonized peoples fling themselves with whatever arms they have against the impregnable citadel of colonialism (Fanon, 2005, pp. 78-9)".

Although the Kurdish movement was not explicitly Marxist at the time of the 49ers, socialist and/or nationalist vocabularies and organizations emerged in their aftermath, particularly in the 1960s and 70s. Whether Marxist or nationalist, their political consciousness was not framed solely by ethnic or tribal identity but by universalist notions of rights, equality, and resistance, similar to anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa. When Ho Chi Minh quoted the U.S. Declaration of Independence while declaring Vietnam's liberation, saying, "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights: Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Johnson, 2011, p. 7), he was symbolizing a global ideological shift that also informed Kurdish intellectuals of the time, even if indirectly.

The 49ers were neither a homogeneous group nor were their political goals always clearly articulated. However, their collective experience during the incarceration and trial cemented their role as symbolic personalities in the genealogy of Kurdish nationalism, as many 49ers continued to participate in politics. They became the first generation of Kurdish youth who articulated a modern, political, and oppositional vision of Kurdishness through their education, urban migration, and ideological exposure.

Thus, in contrast to approaches that view the 49ers as an isolated episode, this study situates them within a continuum of modern Kurdish nationalism, shaped by the global

zeitgeist, modern education, and the Turkish state's repressive policies. By applying the theoretical models of Gellner, Hroch, Oran, and Fanon, the study not only explains why the 49ers emerged but also how they represented a unique synthesis: the first generation to experience the Kurdish question as a political identity within the frame of a nation-state that refused to recognize them.

1.2. Literature Review

Although many studies mention the trial of the 49ers, in-depth case analyses remain limited. Naci Kutlay, a 49er, has produced the most comprehensive works in this field. Kutlay is one of the most prolific authors in northern Kurdish history, focusing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has also written extensively on the case, particularly in various Kurdish journals published across Europe following the 1980 military coup, where he explored the historical and causal dimensions of the trial. As he did in his book *49'lar Dosyası* (The 49ers Case) in 1994, which includes the complete court documents and an article on defendants' socio-economic background analysis, Kutlay produced the foundational work in this field.

Furthermore, Kutlay's memoir *Anılarım* (My Memories), published in 1998, also offers detailed accounts of his prison experiences, contemporaries, and the era's political climate. He gave an interview specifically for this study. In sum, Kutlay's contributions form the backbone of the literature on the 49ers.

Memoirs constitute the most fruitful genre within the 49ers' literature. In addition to Kutlay, many other members of the 49ers have either published their memoirs or conveyed their recollections through interview books. Despite being regarded as the "ringleader" of the 49ers and the symbolic and de facto leader of Kurdish youth at the time, Musa Anter's memoir, *Hatıralarım* (My Memoirs), published in 1991, though not engaging deeply with the ideological debates within the prison, is nonetheless a crucial source. It eloquently depicts the misery of prison life and the solidarity among Kurdish inmates. Anter's memoirs are frequently cited in existing studies on the case, alongside those of Çamlıbel and Kutlay.

Other essential contributions in the genre of interview books include Yaşar Kaya's recollections and the interview-based work with Canip Yıldırım. The interviews with Canip Yıldırım were conducted by Orhan Miroğlu and published under the title *Hevsel Bahçesinde Bir Dut Ağacı* (A Mulberry Tree in Hevsel Garden) in 2005. As the ideological figure among the 49ers, Yıldırım's testimony helps to perceive the political dynamics in Türkiye at the time and the prevailing perceptions of Kurds in the lead-up to the arrests.

Among those who wrote their memories, Yavuz Çamlıbel stands out. His book *49'lar Davası: Bir Garip Ülkenin İdamlık Kürtleri* (The 49ers Trial: The Death-Sentenced Kurds in a Strange Country) was published in 2007. It is one of only two publications whose titles directly refer to the case. Çamlıbel gives a detailed account of his prison days. His work is significant as it remains the most comprehensive book, thoroughly mentioning the ideologies, class backgrounds, and personal characteristics of many 49ers.

Another 49er who published his memoirs is Nurettin Yılmaz. His memoir *Yakın Tarihin Tanığıyım* (I am the Wittnes of Contemporary History) was published in 2008. This source includes numerous anecdotes about the pre-arrest period and the social life of Kurdish students in Ankara. Şerafettin Elçi was from Cizre, studied in Ankara and gave a long-form interview with Hasan Kaya before his death. The resulting book, *Doğu'nun Elçisinden Yüce Divan'a: Şerafettin Elçi*, (From the Ambassador of the East to the Supreme Court: Şerafettin Elçi) published in 2012, traces the trajectory from Kurdish socialization to political radicalization, offering a comprehensive panorama of the period. *Yaşar Kaya'nın Hatıraları* (Yaşar Kaya's Memoirs) was published in 2015, based on conversations with Şefîq Pêşeng. Like Elçi and Yılmaz's accounts of Kurdish student life in Ankara, this book has plenty of anecdotes about Kurdish students in Istanbul and later in prison, referencing key figures of the era.

Even though they do not directly focus on the 49ers as their main topic, several valuable studies authored by individuals outside academia but active within Kurdish political circles benefit from access to primary sources and personal connections, while adhering to the methodological norms of the social sciences. One such work is from Celal Temel, whose book *1984'ten Önceki 25 Yılda Kürdlerin Silahsız Mücadelesi* (The Kurds' Non-

violent Struggle in the 25 Years Before 1984) was published in 2015. According to Temel, the legal and political accumulation of the Kurdish movement before the 1980 coup – and its pioneering cadres – emerged from those arrested in the trial of the 49ers; thus, he considers 1959 the beginning of the non-violent Kurdish rights movement. Temel's work is especially valuable for its close analysis of trial records and the defendants' court statements, making it one of the most essential sources in the literature.

Another significant contribution is Ruşen Aslan's *Ömrü Kısa Etkisi Büyük Kürt Örgütlenmesi: Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları – DDKO* (A Short-lived Kurdish Organization with Great Impact – DDKO) in 2020, which focuses on the driving organization of the Kurdish leftist movement in the 1970s. This study also thoroughly analyzes pre-DDKO Kurdish politics and the consequences of the trial of the 49ers. Aslan argues that there was an organic connection between the 49ers and the DDKO.

One of the key works in the academic literature on the rising Kurdish movement in the 1960s is Azat Zana Gündoğan's thesis, "The Kurdish Political Mobilization in the 1960s: The Case of Eastern Meetings", published at METU in 2005. His thesis stands out as one of the most accomplished studies in literature. As Gündoğan puts it, instead of conducting Türkiye-centric research and focusing on incidents such as the military coup in 1960, he explores factors he considers internal in the Kurdish context, such as the Southern Kurdish rebellion led by Barzani or the Trial of the 49ers (Gündoğan, 2005, p. 16). He later argues that certain 49ers members, to some extent, paved the way for the future organization of the Eastern Meetings.

Ahmet Alış analyzes the emergence of the Kurdish movement throughout the 1960s and 1970s while centering its relationship with the Turkish leftists in his master's thesis "The Process of the Politicization of the Kurdish Identity in Türkiye: the Kurds and the Turkish Labor Party (1961–1971)" published in 2009 at Boğaziçi University and doctorate dissertation "The Kurdish Ethnoregional Movement in Türkiye: From Class to Nation (1959-1974) and from Nation to Revolution (1974-1984)" in 2017 at Boğaziçi University. He applies Hroch's three-phased evolution of nationalism theory; Alış also divides Kurdish generations into 58ers, 68ers, and 78ers. Not only does he mention the 49ers as the first bulk of the 58ers, but he also points out their particular functions, such as joining

the Turkish Labor Party (TLP) later, and their importance in the evolution of the Kurdish movement by coining a broader term for them (Alış, 2017, pp. 77-9).

Hamit Bozarslan's 2013 article titled "*Notes for a Historical-Sociological Reading and Some Hypotheses on the Memoirs of the 'Forty-Niners'*," published in *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar,* stands out as one of the rare case study articles in the literature that focuses specifically on the 49ers. In the article, Bozarslan categorizes the 49ers by class position, age, and level of education, questioning whether they constitute a sociological sample. He also uses the term "socialization", which is frequently employed in this thesis as well. According to Bozarslan, what existed among the Kurdish youth was not a political "movement," as the state claimed, but rather a form of social cohesion that emerged in the 1940s from shared regional and cultural backgrounds, which later evolved into a mild form of militancy in the late 1950s without yet assuming an entirely political expression (Bozarslan, 2013, p. 137). Bozarslan's article remains one of the most structured.

Another academic work in the field is Bilal Nergiz's doctoral dissertation titled "The State's Kurdish Policy and the Kurdish Movement (1945–1960)" (*Devletin Kürt Politikası ve Kürt Hareketi (1954-1960)*) published at Istanbul University in 2019. Nergiz contends that the period after 1945 was significant as Türkiye embraced a redefined approach to the Kurdish issue – seemingly fresh in its presentation yet fundamentally grounded in the same nation-state logic as before. He asserts that the Trial of the 49ers arose from the Turkish state's persistent nationalist tendencies. Thus, the 49ers reintroduced the Kurdish question into political discourse, contributing to the Kurdish movement's reemergence (Nergiz, 2019, p. 177).

Unfortunately, academic research focusing on the Trial of the 49ers is scarce. One of the few examples is Onur Eci's master's thesis, *Türkiye'de Kürtçülük Hareketi ve Kırk Dokuzlar Davası* (The Kurdish Movement in Türkiye and the Case of the Forty-Nines), submitted in 2022 at Gümüşhane University. The thesis adopts a discourse analysis approach centered on the state's narrative but remains a relatively superficial overview. Another relevant academic work is Nefise Şenel Varol's 2019 master's thesis from Dokuz Eylül University, titled *27 Mayıs 1960 Askeri Darbesi Sonrasında Türkiye'de İzlenen*

Kürt Politikası (1958–1971) (Türkiye's Kurdish Policy after the 1960 Military Coup). She analyzes the Kurdish political and cultural improvements in Iraq after Qasim's military takeover in 1958 and the symbolic influence of Barzani on the trial of the 49ers. Moreover, Şenel Varol examines the court records of the trial in detail.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, FACTORS, IMPRISONMENT, AND AFTERMATH

2.1. Historical Background of the Kurdish Problem

2.1.1. Up to 1950

2.1.1.1. The Brief History of the Kurds Under the Ottoman Empire

The Kurds had a long-lasting relationship with the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century. Even though the Ottoman state turned into an empire after the fall of Istanbul and subsequent fundamental reforms in the administrative body initiated by Mehmet II, the contact between the Kurdish princedoms and the Sublime Porte was minimal since there was a plethora of *beylik*s that served as a buffer zone between them. However, the Ottoman eastward expansion and incorporation of *beylik*s such as Ramazanids and Dulkadirids under Selim I diminished the buffer zone. The rise of a young, charismatic leader named Ismail in the Iranian basin and his propaganda among the Anatolian Turcomans caused a threat to the Ottoman authority (Bergum, 2017, p. 15). Since the vast majority of the Kurds adhered to the Shafi-Sunni interpretation of Islam, Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi and many Kurdish local elites allied with Ottomans and Kurds, and the Kurdish princedoms became vassal states of the Ottomans (Fuccaro, 2011, p. 239).

For three hundred years, the status quo in Kurdistan remained. Under the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish leaders wielded considerable local power, often as semi-autonomous rulers or chieftains in the mountainous regions. The 19th century was a pivotal era for the Kurdish people, marked by an intricate interaction of sociopolitical changes and the pursuit of autonomy within the shifting political agendas in the Middle East. Nestled in a region spanning modern-day Türkiye, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the Kurds, an ethnically diverse and historically rich population, found themselves grappling with the emergence of modern states. After Mahmud II came to the throne, he initiated a radical modernization

program, exterminating local power groups to create a strong central administration that could tax directly instead of relying on local tax farmers (Aytekin, 2013, p. 318). However, as the Ottoman central authority sought to exert more control and modernize its administration, tensions arose between the Kurds and the empire, culminating in sporadic rebellions and conflicts throughout the century.

Amidst these tumultuous circumstances, prominent Kurdish leaders emerged, such as Mir Muhammad and Bedirkhan Beg in the early 19th century, who sought to unify Kurdish tribes and preserve the status of Kurdish princedoms. Many historians assert that Bedirkhan's primary motivation was not to initiate a revolt to establish an independent Kurdistan under his sovereignty but to ensure his privileges against the reforms implemented by the central government (Ozoglu, 2012, p. 71). Bedir Khan's endeavors eventually led to his exile.

The Sublime Porte expected to maintain a stable tax income since it got rid of the mediators between the state and its subjects. Yet, it did not go as well as planned. While the state was struggling with establishing a competent bureaucracy to collect taxes even from the closest sanjaks to Istanbul, sending civil servants to Kurdish cities, almost one of the farthest regions of the empire, was an impossible mission. According to Ozoglu (2012), the power vacuum created by the absence of local notables led to the emergence of religious figures as leaders and tax mediators (pp. 73-4). The most influential one among them was Sheikh Ubeydullah. From an ulama family, he combined Kurdish nationalist elements with his Islamic charisma. The chaotic atmosphere following the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877-78 witnessed his rebellion against both Ottomans and Kadjars. Although the rebellion was crushed, his revolt marked the first Kurdish insurrection with nationalist characteristics (Jwaideh, 2006, p. 156).

The Ottoman State's reaction to revolts in Kurdistan after the suppression was to relocate them to the capital instead of liquidating the notables. They aimed to assure their loyalty to the sultan while cutting their roots with Kurdistan to prevent potential upheavals. After the loss in the Russo-Ottoman War of 93, the Ottomanist ideology to invent one unified nation above religions was replaced with an Ottoman nation based on Muslim subjects, such as the Kurds and Albanians. Military units such as the Hamidian Troops (Klein,

2007, p. 157) and educational institutions like Tribal Schools were founded (Rogan, 1996, p. 87). While Abdulhamid II struggled with the Kurdish issue in the post-Ubeydullah years, Kurdish nationalism was at the dawn of its emergence in Cairo. Published by a Bedirkhanid in 1898, the Kurdistan journal was not in favor of an independent Kurdistan but called for autonomy within the Ottoman fatherland, yet it was still the first Kurdish nationalist print for its insistence on Kurdish rights (Bajalan, 2009, p. 66). In addition to the Sheikh Ubeydullah Rebellion and Kurdistan Journal, Eppel (2014) names Kadir Koyi's literary efforts as the third milestone for the emergence of the Kurdish nationalist movement (p. 37). Underlining the fact that Koyi never wrote literary pieces with nationalist elements before moving to Istanbul and spending his last years with the Bedirkhanid family (Özel, 2020, p. 504), the next generation of Bedirkhanids will also have a special place in the foundation of Kurdish nationalism.

The 1908 Revolution paved the way for Kurdish thought to flourish in Ottoman public opinion – even though it was restricted to Istanbul with limited contact with Kurdistan. This new era was welcomed with the foundation of the Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress Society (*Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) and its official newspaper. Bajalan (2009) makes a distinction between KMAPS's Istanbul headquarters and its branches in Kurdistan – or as he calls the Young and Old Kurds and states that the Old Kurds were somewhat reactionary since the disestablishment of Hamidian Troops was a setback in relatively autonomous tribal organizations and their leaderships while Young Kurds championed the revolution (pp. 76-9). Even though the two parties among the Kurdish elites held different opinions over the revolution, neither favored an independent Kurdistan: besides KMAPS, other organizations, such as the Kurdish Hope Society (*Kürt Hevi Cemiyeti*) and the Propagation of Kurdish Education Society (*Kürd Neşri Maarif Cemiyeti*). Yet, the increasing nationalism in the CUP and the empire's collapse caused disillusionment among the Young Kurds (Dersimi, 1997, p. 31). Eventually, it led the Young Kurds to officially establish the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*) in 1918.

The SRK was a big tent Kurdish organization that included a plethora of elites from Baban, Bedirkhan, Cemilpaşa, Sekban, and Nehri families. Thus, ideological fractions

between the Old Kurds and the New. Seyyid Abdülkadir, the son of Sheikh Ubeydullah and the chair of SRK, favored autonomy, whereas Emin Ali Bedirhan, a young Bedirkhanid intellectual, advocated for an independent Kurdistan. Özoğlu (2012) mentions that SRK openly supported the Wilson Principles and established sister organizations like the Society for the Spread of Kurdish Education and Publications (*Kürd Neşr-i Maarif Cemiyeti*) and the Society for the Advancement of Kurdish Women (*Kürt Teali Kadın Cemiyeti*) to lay a foundation for such achievements in 1919 (p. 82). Cemil, Kamran, Celadet Ali Bedirkhan, Bedirkhanid brothers, and notable members of the SRK even joined British major Noel's feasibility test/tour for British support for an independent Kurdistan (Atatürk, 2015, pp. 109-10). However, the Ankara government's success and foundation of Türkiye started an era of total suppression of anything related to the Kurds.

2.1.1.2. The Republican Era and Anti-Kurdish Policies

As noted above, there was a divide between the Young Kurds of Istanbul, who advocated more radical Kurdish nationalism, and the Old Kurds of Kurdistan, who favored the continuation of the Hamidian status quo. This ideological distinction also showed itself during the War of Independence. Young Kurds, like Celadet Bedirkhan, were aware that an independent Kurdistan would not be established if the Kemalists were successful. On the other hand, Old Kurds believed cooperating with the Turks was the best way to preserve their status. After the Armenian Genocide and the Abandoned Property Law, many Kurdish elites accumulated immense wealth (Çetinoğlu, 2009, para. 72). Yet, right after the defeat, many Kurdish cities were invaded by foreign troops, including Armenian Volunteers. It caused a scare among the Kurdish elites, and many Old Kurds aligned with Ankara (McDowall, 2021, pp. 141-42). The Ankara Government's attitude towards the Kurds was warm. First, Mustafa Kemal recognized "the freedom of development for the Kurds through social rights" in the Amasya Protocol. Second, the 12th article of the 1921 Constitution emphasized the "autonomy of provinces and districts," which excited the Kurds (Hür, 2013, pp. 274-75). Thus, they saw no problem in supporting Ankara's cause.

Spring between Kurds and Turks gave way to winter after the declaration of the republic. Some Young Kurds fled abroad. Old Kurds were frustrated because of the new constitution that came into force in April 1924. Because this constitution – as Yeğen (2013) says - was a text that defines the political and administrative unity in Anatolia on *milliyet*, instead of *millet* as in the Ottoman Empire, and therefore fundamentally denied the political and legal rights of the Kurds (p. 119), the disappointment of the Kurds would be compounded by 15 years of terror shaped by a series of rebellions and extraordinary state oppression. Disillusioned Old Kurds realigned with the Young Kurds and founded the Azadi organization.[3] Azadi started a small-scale rebellion in the Beytüşşebap in 1924 (Cemal, 2023, p. 107). However, the real blow broke out in 1925 under Sheikh Said's leadership in the Zaza-speaking region of Diyarbakır; Sheikh Said was also related to Halit Bey of Cibran, the leader of the Azadi organization (Olson, 1989, p. 49). The dominant discourse of the revolt was Islamic. In their songs about the rebellion, Kurds express their discomfort with being unable to teach students and how laws turned into foreign laws (Şakîro, 2000). However, labeling the rebellion as merely Islamic would be misleading. Olson (1989) says, "The fact that the rebellion had a religious character was the result of Azadi's assessment of the strategy and tactics necessary for carrying out a successful revolution; while the Sheikh Said rebellion was a nationalist rebellion, immobilization, propaganda, and symbols were those of a religious rebellion" (p. 153).

Although the rebellion remained local, its impact in Türkiye was massive. For example The expenditure was a third of the new republic's annual budget (Bozarslan, 2005, p. 90). Ankara found an opportunity to implement its anti-Kurd policies, which would be fieldwork to reshape the society as imagined in the 1924 Constitution. Fethi Okyar, the prime minister of Türkiye amidst the rebellion, found measures suggested by Atatürk's and İnönü's brutal and left office. According to his resignation letter statement, his motive was not to soak blood on his hands (Koç, 2013, p. 160). The Law for the Maintenance of Public Order was promulgated the day after İnönü became the prime minister. The law

[3] This is a slightly controversial issue. Martin van Bruinessen notes Azadi was founded in 1923 (Bruinessen, 2013, p. 292). In his study on the Sheikh Said Rebellion, prepared from British archive documents, Cemal asserts that Azadi was founded in 1921 (Cemal, 2023, pp. 78-79).

required the foundation of two Independence Tribunals for Diyarbakır and Ankara. Without having the right to appeal, many Kurdish elites were exterminated after trials. However, the most devastating implementation targeting the Kurds was the 1925 Plan for Reform in the East.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk established the Reform Council for the East in response to the Sheik Said Rebellion. İsmet İnönü presided over the council, and its members included high-ranking political and military figures. The Reform Council presented its report to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. This report outlined recommendations for the Eastern Reform Plan. The plan introduced the resettlement of the Kurds in Western Anatolia, total prohibition on the Kurdish language, creation of Inspectorate General posts in Kurdish cities, and many other atrocities among the Kurds (Bayrak, 2013, pp. 35-40).

The relentless Turkish response to the Sheikh Said Rebellion and subsequent assimilationist policies alarmed the Young Kurds abroad. Sporadic conflicts with the Turkish army were still ongoing. All Kurdish organizations repealed themselves and unified under the name *Hoybun* (National Selfness) with the assistance of Armenian revolutionaries in Beirut in October 1927. Celadet Ali Bedirhan was appointed as the president of this new organization. (Jwaideh, 2016, p. 410). The *Hoybun* initiated a propaganda campaign. It published a brochure called "The Massacre of the Kurds in Türkiye" in 1928. Their claim in the brochure was to "expose lies of Türkiye regarding the murder of thousands of innocent people." They declared that an independent Kurdistan is the Kurdish people's most fundamental right; otherwise, the Kurds would face the consequences that Armenians went through (Bayrak, 2013, pp. 48-9). Compared to its antecedents like Azadi and SRK, *Hoybun*'s discourse distinguishes itself as a full-fledged nationalist. Because the organization was founded in the terrorizing atmosphere of post-1925 implementations, the radicalization in Kurdish thought seems like a direct reaction to ongoing incidents imposed by the state.

In the same year that the brochure was published, the Turkish Republic issued a general amnesty for the Kurdish rebel groups, which were still stationed in the mountains. However, some did not trust the state and took refuge in the Mount Ararat region. Hoybun leadership sent İhsan Nuri Pasha to Ağrı to meet with dissident rebels and to form a

Kurdish government in 1928 (Bruinessen, 2013, p. 430). This movement, known as the Ağrı Rebellion in 1929, was much more nationalistic than the Sheikh Said Rebellion and was based on military order rather than religious charisma. In this respect, the rebellion was a greater danger for the young republic, so much so that the Ankara Government ceded some of its lands to Iran to grant its support against Kurdish rebels (As, 2010, p. 244). In addition to Iran, it is claimed that the Soviet Air Forces also supported the suppression of the rebellion to some extent (Hun, 2020 para. 26).

The Ankara Government launched unprecedented attacks against the civilian population in suppressing the rebellion. Before the final operation on Mount Ararat, the civilians living in the Zilan Valley were mass murdered by Salih Omurtak's troops. According to the government newspaper Cumhuriyet, the number of people killed in the massacre was 15,000 (Mazhar, 1930, p. 2). The Turkish Army offensive, combined with air strikes, ended in September 1930, and rebel leaders like Halis Beg and İhsan Nuri Pasha fled to Iran.

The years following the suppression of the Ağrı Rebellion coincided with the rise of Social Darwinism. The Turkish History Thesis, based on Turkish superiority over all races, became the official historical narrative of the Turkish state in 1931. The thesis claims that the Kurds were, in fact, mountain Turks. Celadet Ali Bedirhan wrote an open letter to Mustafa Kemal on the 10th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, criticizing his anti-Kurd policies. Ali rejected the mountainous Turk definition concerning the words of Ziya Gökalp, the ideologue of Turkish nationalism, "Kurdish is the richest language of the East," while mocking his Kurdish background. He emphasized the uniqueness of Kurdistan's own history and geography. For him, the Kurdish problem began the day the Kurdish tribes swore allegiance to Yavuz Sultan Selim by İdris-i Bitlisi. Thus, it is neither a matter of tribe nor sect but a nationality. According to Bedirhan (2010), Atatürk was a hypocrite since the agreement between the Kurdish "aghas" and Ankara was broken right after the Greek army was expelled and the people who helped them were executed (p. 49). He said that the CUP's "assimilating Muslims and massacring non-Muslims" strategy continued. Still, it would not be successful in assimilating the Kurds and recognizing the Kurdistan's existence, and Kurdish rights would be the right step

(Bedirxan, 2010, p. 116). Celadet Ali's framework was widely used by next-generation Kurdish intellectuals such as Anter and is still used by Kurdish activists today.

Celadet, Kamran, and Sureya Bedirkhan brothers, the most prominent young Kurds, were stationed in the French Mandate of Syria to become closer to the mainland. Their years there were marked by their contribution to Kurdish thought. They Latinized the Kurmanj Kurdish alphabet and published the journals Cry (*Hawar*) (1932 – 43, which they smuggled out of French Syria into Türkiye. Cry complied with the works of Kurdish nationalist literati like Osman Sebri, Qedri Can, Nureddin Zaza, Cigerxwin, Ehmed Nami, and Kadri Cemil Pasa (Galip, 2015, p. 74).[4] However, contrary to their Turkish counterparts in the 1860s, they had to fight against a well-established modern nation-state. Thus, reaching the Kurdish audience was far more challenging.

On the other hand, the Ankara government sought a social engineering policy based on pseudoscientific theories such as Turkish History and Language Theses. Dersim was the new target since it was isolated from both centrality and the concept of modern Turkishness in history, thanks to its location. In one of those reports prepared by İsmet İnönü, he asked for a law specifically for Dersim since its people were not enlightened enough to decide on their own in legal terms (Beşikçi, 1992, p. 46). The Tunceli Law concerning the modernization of Dersim was promulgated in 1935. After a bunch of soldiers raped a woman in Dersim, locals decided to take arms to defend themselves in 1938 (Emre, 2015, p. 47).

Bilmez (2023) defines the Turkish operation as an “inner conquest” that resembles modern colonialist conquests yet highlights its uniqueness since it aims to modernize the backward living within. He refers to the savior Turk image prompted during the Dersim Operation as a Turkish form of white men’s burden and thus points out how the trivialization of civilian casualties under the guise of collateral damages for the sake of civilization. (pp. 175-76). The Turkish discourse of civilization was also targeted by Nuri Dersimi, who was somewhat of the ideologist of the Dersim Rebellion. A Young Kurd

[4] These journals will be read by the new generation of Kurds who moved to Istanbul in the 1940s and even the 50s. It will be mentioned in the following chapters on the trials of the 49.

educated in Istanbul, he witnessed the genocidal military operation and wrote a letter to the General Secretary of the League of Nations. He said the Turkish state's "civilizing" policies were, in fact, an oppression unprecedented in history. Therefore, it was urgent for the League of Nations, the highest institution of civilization, to intervene in the situation for the sake of the Kurdish people. (Dersimi, 1952 p. 296). For the Young Kurds, Dersim was a genocidal defeat that killed their hopes for either autonomy or independence for Kurdistan and, at the same time, the final epistemological rupture from considering itself within the Turkish realm. The post-Dersim years began a new era called the Kurdish Interregnum that lasted in the trial of the 49ers (Arslan, 2020, p. 61).

2.1.1.3. WWII Years and the Impact of Tigris Student Dormitory

Türkiye entered World War II years without the Kurdish issue. After the Dersim Massacre, the government enacted total control over Kurdish cities. At the same time, the rest of the world was busy with a horrible series of violations, including the Ethiopian Crisis and the Partition of Czechoslovakia. The only expectation of the free world from Türkiye was to be sure that they would not be aligned with the Axis forces such that right after the Italian invasion of Albania in April 1939, an Anglo-Turkish cooperation agreement was signed the next month. While allowing the Turkish annexation of Antakya, the French government signed an agreement with Türkiye on the same points (Hakki, 2005, pp. 6-7). The Kurdish Problem was disregarded to appease Türkiye during these tumultuous years.

As the armed struggle against the Turkish state was proven impossible, Kurdish concerns shifted to the preservation of Kurdish culture against the assimilationist policies. Kurdish intellectuals' primary effort during WWII was predominantly literary. In addition to Cry, Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan published a new journal named New Day (*Roja Nu*) between 1943 and 1946. Nevertheless, the Kurdish intelligentsia lacked a nation-state. Thus, they relied on the idea of Kurdistan as the national homeland to prove the existence of Kurdishness beyond modern times and on the Kurdification of the Turkish nationalist discourse instead of deconstructing it. By doing this, they mythologized the historiography and invented slogans that all nationalisms needed (Bozarslan, 2008, p.

851). For instance, Nuri Dersimi wrote an address to the Kurdish Youth with the same title as Atatürk's address to the Turkish Youth.

Turkification through education had reached a certain level, and the 1940s witnessed the first college-student Kurds of the Republican era. Kurdish youth were now moving to Ankara and Istanbul to study at boarding high schools and universities. However, the anti-Kurdish climate of the period was highly traumatic for Kurdish children. They felt the need to be with people who shared the same experiences. Kurdish activists such as Yusuf Azizoğlu and Mustafa Remzi Bucak founded the Tigris Student Dormitory in Istanbul in 1939 to solve the accommodation problem of Kurdish college students and to prevent them from breaking away from their Kurdish identity (Nergiz, 2021, p. 50).

The foundation of the dormitory has an exciting story. Remzi Bucak was a law student in France and a member of the Bucak family from Siverek. However, he abandoned his education following the Nazi occupation of France. During his student years, he decided to open the dormitory upon the advice of a Bulgarian friend, "First wake up the youth, then organize the cadres." (Bucak, 2021, p. 33). However, since opening a dormitory for Kurdish children was impossible, they persuaded the then First General Inspector, Abidin Özmen, to become the honorary president (Anter, 2010, p. 55). In this way, they shielded one of the most senior figures of the Kemalist bureaucracy, created a regular income for the dormitory's expenses, and secured the target audience, as all the young people coming from the First General Inspectorate would be Kurds.

Although he was not among the founders, Musa Anter was the manager of the Tigris Student Dormitory and "the apple of the eye" of the Kurdish youth. Anter was born in 1920 into a small landowner family from Mardin. As a promising college kid, he moved to Istanbul. His belief in the Kurdish cause and his marriage to Hale Hanım, a member of the Kurdish elite Zapsu family, enabled him to contact members of the Young Kurd movement. He founded the Liberating the Kurds Society *(Kürtleri Kurtarma Cemiyeti*) along with Remzi Bucak, Faik Bucak, Yusuf Azizoğlu, and Ziya Şerefhanoğlu in the dormitory. The Society was more like a fraternity of five people rather than an active political organization since no one was later included in these five people (Arslan, 2020, pp. 64-5). These young people in their 20s took the oath by holding the gun and flag,

similar to the CUP's membership ritual. According to Anter, although the organization was illegal, its intention was for good, like saving their own people, in addition to the fact that they had no hostility towards Turks, and the publication of the Tigris Spring (*Dicle Kaynağı*) newspaper in 1948 would take place in parallel with this oath (Anter, 2010, p. 56).

Following Anter's statement that “those who stayed in the dormitory were miserable Kurdish children,” Alış (2010) lists the names of those who stayed in the dormitory and says that these children were neither poor nor “Kurdistanî” (para. 12). If we assume that what Alış means by “Kurdistanî” is radicalism, he may be right. However, student profiles in Tigris Dorm share many parallels with the Young Turk movement. First, most of the Young Turks were children of privileged Ottoman families. Ahmed Rıza's father was a member of the State Council, and Sabahattin was a prince. Ultimately, the commonality between a Turk being able to go to Paris in the 1880s and a Kurd going to Istanbul in the 1940s requires pretty good socioeconomic conditions. In addition, Children from exiled Kurdish families also stayed in the dorm. Edip Altınakar and Yusuf Azizoğlu, listed by Alış, were from the exiled Kurdish elite families (Diken, 2007, p. 46). What Anter means by misery is social and political rather than economic. Another issue is that it is a function of the dormitory rather than the profile of the residents. Tarık Ziya Ekinci, a Marxist Kurd politician in the '60s and '70s, was one of the Tigris Dorm Students. Although Ekinci (2013) did not openly witness any underground activity in the Tigris Dorm, he says that he became conscious of Kurdishness there and saw Cry magazine for the first time, thanks to a friend from the Tigris Dormitory. (pp. 157-58). Rather than a revolutionary organization, Tigris Dormitory is an effort by the Kurds, who were oppressed entirely by the Kemalist state, to maintain their identity in a safe zone; thus, one should lower their expectations while evaluating the dorm’s profile. Alış’s evaluation reminds me of a story between Anter and a young Kurdish guerrilla. In the discussion, the guerrilla claimed their generation initiated the struggle for Kurdistan from zero. Musa Anter calmly says his generation raised the situation from minus to zero (Beşikçi, 1991, p. 7). In this sense, the Tigris Dorm was an effort made at “below zero.”

One of the events organized in the Tigris Dormitory was Tigris Nights. The aim was to connect the Kurdish youngsters with their national identity. Those folklore show nights were held on March 21, coinciding with Newroz celebrations and the opening day of the dormitory, and had become one of the most popular events in Istanbul (Ekinci, 2013, p. 157). Famous musicians such as Celal Güzelses took the stage in Tigris Nights (Topdemir, 2014, p. 176). Even high-ranking politicians such as Celal Bayar, Atatürk's last prime minister and the third president of Türkiye, and Franz von Papen, the German ambassador to Türkiye, attended these nights (Anter, 2010, p. 52). Although Kurdish songs were performed with Turkish lyrics, Tigris Nights played an essential role in identity construction as it was a Newroz event.

The years of WWII were milestones in modern Kurdish history. Pro-Nazi Reza Shah Pahlavi was abducted by a joint Anglo-Soviet operation two months after the German invasion of the USSR. Following the operation, the Red Army was stationed in northeastern Iran and established two governments, including the Mahabad Kurdish Republic, in 1946. Headed by Qazi Muhammed, the government took control of the Turkish-Iranian border for a year. Iraqi Kurdish volunteer fighters under Mustafa Barzani joined the newly formed republic and founded the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) along with Qazi Muhammed (McDowall, 2021, pp. 246-48). However, after the Soviet withdrawal, Mahabad was invaded by the Persian army, and Qazi Muhammad was executed. Mustafa Barzani fled to the Soviet Union for over ten years (Barzani, 2003, p. 135). Although short-lived, Mahabad was the first modern Kurdish nation-state-like body ever established.

It was evident that Mahabad caused excitement among the students of Tigris Dorm. Ekinci (2013) says that they could not have a big celebration, but they settled for a modest celebration by offering chocolates to each other (p. 165). The fate of the republic also radicalized discussions among the dormitory students. When the republic was about to collapse, there were discussions among students about fighting in Mahabad. While some students thought it would be more beneficial to graduate from university and become professionals to serve the people, the other faction of the discussion led by Ali Karahan, a Tigris dorm student, later lawyer and 49er, stated that it was urgent to help the Kurds in

Mahabad (Ekinci, 2013, p. 166). Of course, calls for participating in guerilla warfare in Iran were a product of petty-bourgeois radicalism, and no students went to Mahabad in the end.

The dorm was also connected with the Kurdish movement in Iran and Europe to quite a small extent. Abdulrahman Ghassemlou was a young activist who established the Republic of Mahabad's youth organization. His older brother, Ahmed Agha Ghassemlou, was a medical student at Istanbul University. Following the defeat in Mahabad, Abdulrahman Ghassemlou, a young activist, escapes to Istanbul and settles in with his brother. (Çelik, 2021, pp. 51-2). Anter (2010) wrote in his memoirs that he sent Ghassemlou, who stayed for a while at the Tigris Dorm during his time in Istanbul, to Kamuran Bedirkhan's protege so that he could continue his education (p. 112). Kamuran Bedirkhan had migrated to France as a professor at INALCO following the independence of Syria (Winter, 2006, p. 465). As is known, Ghassemlou later became one of the icons of Kurdish political history after starting university at Sorbonne in 1947. This shows us the fact that even though there was a deep rupture in the history of Kurdish nationalism since the foundation of the republic, the continuation of the Kurdish thought was assured through personal connections between the Young Kurds abroad and their associates.

Another political activity that Tigris dorm students participated in was the 1946 Local and Parliamentary Elections. The election was considered fraudulent since people were forced to vote openly, but the votes were classified secretly (Aksın, 1998, p. 216). Tigris dorm students wholeheartedly worked for opposition parties. Although they had no ideological relations with the party, they worked against the People's Republican Party (PRP) out of spite. Before the general elections, Menderes visited the Euphrates Student Dormitory[5] and socialized with the students (Anter, 2010, pp. 118-19). In the local elections, the PRP fraudulently prevented the DP's participation. Thus, Tigris dorm students worked for Nuri Demirağ's National Development Party. Musa Anter became

[5] Euphrates Dorm was the dormitory founded in 1943 after Tigris Dorm became inactive for a while. Like Tigris, it aimed to accommodate students from Kurdish cities and was operated by Musa Anter (Alış, 2010, para. 11).

the head electoral inspector for the DP in Yenikapı, Beyazıt, and Topkapı in the parliamentary elections (Anter, 2010, p. 119).

In examining the individuals residing at Tigris Dormitory and the political figures that emerged in the 1950s, a similarity between the Young Turks and their shared class can be observed. The Young Turks incorporated modern concepts into their own beliefs after being exposed to European education. Similarly, the Kurdish youth of this period did not have to travel to Europe to become familiar with modern ideas. Thanks to the Kemalist modernization, they were able to receive Western-style education in Istanbul and Ankara. The spread of knowledge at the rapid pace of the modern world was seen as modernization itself by Kurdish youth, who went beyond the traditional madrasah curriculum. However, as we will see later, the slogans of this generation would instead bear the core of the anticolonial characteristics of the post-WWII years rather than the "liberty, equality, and fraternity" of the nineteenth century.

The foundation of the newspaper Tigris Spring was another milestone in Kurdish politics in the 40s. Referring to İsmet İnönü's 12 July Declaration[6], the newspaper's life started on 11 July 1948 with the editorial titled "Why We Publish," claiming to be the voice of the underdeveloped East, while admitting the orientalist implication the word East carries (Anter, 2010, p. 121). The journal became the first printed document on many traumatic incidents in Kurdish history, such as the Muğlalı Massacre[7] (Bezwan, 2021, p. 51). The newspaper's influence had also reached young Kurds who had fled Türkiye. The Kurdish diaspora in Syria was closely following the newspaper. Nuri Dersimi sent a letter to the newspaper in 1952, stating that reading the newspaper helped him to alleviate his homesickness, hear the voices of those killed by "modern barbarians," and, therefore, sent them best regards (Akar, 1999, p. 103). Many incidents mentioned in the newspaper would later become more widespread vox populi after Bucak's DP deputation in 1950,

[6] The 12 July Declaration is a statement issued by President İnönü to establish a functioning multi-party system in Türkiye. The declaration promised that both the PRP and the DP would have equal rights in the elections (Baytal & Türkman, 2024, p. 320).

[7] The Muğlalı Massacre, also known as the 33 Bullet Massacre, took place in July 1943 near the town of Özalp in the Van Province of Türkiye. General Mustafa Muğlalı ordered the extrajudicial executions of 33 Kurdish villagers accused of although they were released for the crimes charged (Beşikçi, 1991, p. 73).

and the convalescence period in the 1940s would gradually end and lead to a more dynamic Kurdish opposition.

2.1.2. The Democratic Party Victory in 1950 and a New Era for Kurds

2.1.2.1. The First Five Years Under the Democratic Party

The Democratic Party (DP) secured Kurdish votes by addressing their discomfort with the single-party regime. They submitted a bill to call for a revision in the Settlement Law in 1947. They aimed to change anti-democratic laws to create political maneuvering space away from the single-party regime (Eroğul, 2014, pp. 42-3). The article dividing Kurdistan into subregions about the intensity level of assimilation policies, such as "intended to be assimilated into Turkishness" and "forbidden areas," was abolished. Satisfied by the end of brutal implementation, Kurdish voters showed a remarkable interest in the new political party. The return of many exiled Kurds from the western provinces turned the political atmosphere in the region against the PRP (Çağlayan, 2013, p. 39).

The new Kurdish intelligentsia was taking high and active positions in the party. Canip Yıldırım, a young Kurdish lawyer who studied in Paris and later became a 49'er, was in the youth branch of DP's Diyarbakır section. Edip Altınakar, the future president of Diyarbakır Bar and *İleri Yurt (*Advanced Homeland)'s lawyer, was the head of the DP in Diyarbakır. Their slogan was "Vote for even mountains and rocks but not PRP (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 121)." In this sense, the new party functioned as a dynamo that Kurds could use to create a haven within the Turkish political sphere. The DP won the first democratic elections in Türkiye in 1950 by 55% and enjoyed a decisive victory in Diyarbakır, Dersim, and Ağrı. Many Kurds whom the Kemalists pushed out were able to enter political life - a few even became ministers and were able to help develop their badly neglected eastern provinces. Meanwhile, some were already holding various posts within the PRP while not uttering any political stance in order not to fall victim to Kemalist wrath. For example, Yusuf Azizoğlu, the founder of Tigris Dorm, served as the mayor of Silvan between 1946

and 1950, which led to his political rise and enormous popularity among the people of Diyarbakır (Beştaş, 2024, p. 76). He became DP's Diyarbakır deputy in the 1950 elections along with his friends from the dormitory's board, respectively, Mustafa Remzi Bucak and Mustafa Ekinci. Some prominent rural Young Kurds, such as Halis Öztürk, who was head of the Sipki tribe and Ağrı Rebellion's leading member, and Selahattin İnan were also elected as deputies, respectively, in Ağrı and Bitlis. However, there was one proviso: they had to forget they were Kurds and become Turks (O'Ballance, 1995).

The first historical step taken by the DP government was the imprisonment of General Mustafa Muğlalı in 1950. Osman Şevki Çiçekdağ, a leading DP politician and lawyer, defended the families of Kurdish victims, and later, he held the ministry of justice in Menderes cabinet (Aslan, 1989, p. 40). Muğlalı received the death penalty but was reduced to twenty years in prison. He died before hearing the conclusive ruling from the court (Aras, 2013, p. 65).

The DP amended a new bill concerning the Settlement Law in 1951 that allowed the vast majority of the relocated Kurdish people to return their villages. The deputy who submitted this bill was Mustafa Remzi Bucak – the head of Tigris Dorm. In his letter for the repeal of the law, he criticized its colonialist feature, simply referring to its similarity with the British General Governorate in India, and called for the end of the law with no other qualifications than adding disgusting and terrible bloody pages to our history (Yeşiltuna, 2007, p. 217). Plausibly, Bucak's petition is the first instance of an anti-colonialist text in the republican Turkish parliament in Kurdish history.

Another traumatic event raised by Kurdish deputies in the parliament was the Karaköprü Incident. Following an incident between the pro-Ankara Pirinççizade and the Cemilpaşazade families in 1936, some Cemilpaşazades engaged in armed robbery, including civil servants. State officials called the incident an anti-state upheaval and executed many people, including some notables. Among those executed notable figures was Edip Altınakar's father (Korkmaz, 2013, para. 8). The victims' families sued in 1952, trusting the new and relatively peaceful political atmosphere. Mustafa Ekinci – another Tigris dorm personality, Tarık Zya Ekinci's relative and later Diyarbakır deputy, brought the families' complaints to the parliament (Nergiz, 2020, p. 109). Although the families'

application to the court did not result in a ruling, it excited the Kurdish opposition because of their lack of visibility.

The new leadership in Türkiye has gained strong support among Kurdish voters by reducing the political suppression of their identities; meanwhile, Turkish voters have benefited from a surge in economic prosperity due to the short-term effects of economic liberalization. As a result, the DP received 58.5% of the votes in the 1954 election, a record-breaking figure as no party has achieved such a percentage since then (Tuncer, 2012, p. 22). The DP also won the support of all majority Kurdish cities except Dersim, Kars, and Malatya - İnönü's hometown. The DP had also attracted some influential Kurdish candidates to its lists before the 1954 election. İhsan Hamit Tigrel, one-time PRP deputy, brother of a Malta exile, and from one of the most prominent Kemalist families of Diyarbakır known as Zülfüzades, was in DP deputy list (Ayhan, 2023, pp. 158-60). All Kurdish elites except Remzi Bucak were reelected.

However, the post-1954 election years also marked the beginning of the deteriorating relations between the DP and the rest of the opposition. Economic development came to a decline, especially in the agricultural sector. Menderes adopted hostile policies toward the PRP. The local elections were held nine months after the general elections in 1954. After winning the election, the DP took some controversial actions. They changed the provincial status of Kırşehir, which was won by the Republican National Party, and made it a district. Similarly, the Abana district of Kastamonu was also turned into a subdistrict. The leader of the Republican Nation Party (RNP), Bölükbaşı, had his immunity lifted. Moreover, many judges and high-ranking civil servants were forced to retire (Demirel, 2021, p. 251). People saw these actions as punitive measures the DP took against those who did not vote for them. In protest of the DP's harsh policies, the opposition chose not to participate in the 1955 local elections. As a result, only the Peasant Party and some independent candidates entered the race. Due to the boycott, the turnout for the 1955 municipal council elections was only 38% (Nergiz, 2020, p. 119). The radical change in the political conjuncture also affected the mutual bond between the Menderes government and some Kurdish elites. Once a vital part of the crusade against the Kemalist regime, the Kurds now became expendable comrades for the DP.

Bilal Nergiz examines the economic and social transformation in the Kurdish provinces and the Kurdish movement by analyzing the Kurdish policy of the Turkish state between 1945 and 1960. DP integrated the Muş Plain and Kars Plateau with the Western market through the railways, opened a thread factory in Erzincan, put the Urfa – Mardin and Midyat – Cizre roads out to tender, decupled the number of trucks in Diyarbakır; funded aghas through loans and subsidized fertilizers and seeds in the first five years (Nergiz, 2019, pp. 69-73). The unprecedented economic boom in five years had a significant impact on the Kurdish provinces. There was a population explosion in cities such as Diyarbakır because of migrations due to agricultural mechanization. Kurdish capital owners entered the industrial sectors and construction projects. Those who established organic ties with the DP began to own crucial businesses such as fuel and cement dealerships. In these years, when tractors were essential, pro-DP Kurds were the top priority in owning their franchises (Nergiz 2019, p. 88). The DP initiated the integration of the Kurdish provinces into the capitalist relations of production by transforming the aghas into a bourgeois class. This would inevitably result in the development of new ideological viewpoints concerning the Kurds in the future.

2.1.2.2. The Liberty Party (*Hürriyet Partisi*) and the Kurdish Participation

DP's authoritarianism increased after the 1954 elections, leading to a "burden of proof" debate.[8] The debate caused a huge conflict in the party. Manisa Deputy Fevzi Lütfi Karaosmanoğlu, who served as the Minister of Internal Affairs under Menderes, started an opposition movement within the DP due to its press policy. Eleven DP deputies, including Mustafa Ekinci from Diyarbakır and Kasım Küfrevi from Ağrı, backed the motion supporting the necessity of the burden of proof; later, nine deputies joined the signatories. As a result, the politically liberal and economically conservative Liberty Party

[8] The "burden of proof" is a fundamental concept in legal systems that determines which party is responsible for presenting evidence to support their claims in a legal proceeding. In a legal dispute, one party typically asserts a claim, and the burden of proof outlines the responsibility for providing sufficient evidence to establish the truth of that claim (Karataş, 2020, p. 2).

(*Hürriyet Partisi*) (LP) was founded by the signatory deputies and nine additional politicians in December 1955 (Göktürk Çetinkaya, 2020, p. 158).

There was a significant interest among Kurds in the LP as many younger Kurds joined the party. The party's representatives in parliament from Tigris dorm, such as Mustafa Ekinci and Yusuf Azizoğlu from Diyarbakır, as well as Hamit Tigrel, a Kurdish Kemalist who joined the LP in Diyarbakır. In Elazığ, Suphi Ergene, who was not part of the Kurdish movement but was the brother of Nureddin Zaza, the founder of KDP's Syria faction, joined the LP. Meanwhile, Cihad Baban, who was not involved in Kurdish politics despite being a member of the Babanzades, resigned from his DP post and joined the new party as Izmir's deputy. Young, charismatic politicians from Diyarbakır – who later became deputies from the New Türkiye Party (NTP) led by Azizoğlu – such as Recai İskenderoğlu and Selahattin Cizrelioğlu, were on the 1957 electoral candidates' list (Öğredik, 2013, p. 24). Although Kasım Küfrevi was among the signatories, he did not participate in the party, remained independent, and joined the DP after the 1957 elections (Kiran, 2021, p. 96). Finally, some rural young Kurds, such as Halis Öztürk and Selahattin İnan, stayed with the DP.

At this point, it is crucial to draw a distinction. As mentioned, Bajalan divides the Kurdish intelligentsia into two groups based on the sociopolitical conditions at the beginning of the twentieth century: Old and Young Kurds. On the one hand, the former relied on traditional power relations shaped in the realm of feudalism. On the other hand, the latter envisioned a Kurdistan based on the new context that emerged during and after World War I. In the 1950s, a new generation that believed in its own political program emerged, around the same age as the republic. This group can be referred to as the second Young Kurds. For example, Mustafa Ekinci was born in 1904, and Yusuf Azizoğlu was born in 1917. Since these young people are now the product of a new political atmosphere stemming from the institutions of the modern republic, they require separate identification.

The LP is worth examining because it is the first instance in which the ideological split among the Young Kurds becomes apparent. Describing the Kurdish opposition as a monolithic entity before or during the DP rule is inaccurate. However, it would not be

wrong to say that the factionalism between Young and Second Young Kurds emerged similarly in the 1910s and 20s. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, most of the urban young Kurds fled the country. Thus, most of the young Kurds who stayed in Kurdistan were predominantly rural members of that generation. Just as the old Kurds fought to uphold their traditional rights granted by the empire, the young Kurds were more focused on preserving acquired rights provided by the Menderes government.

Ekinci (2013) believes that Ekinci and Azizoğlu were the representatives of both the Kurdish gentry and intelligentsia, and even though the vast majority of the second Young Kurds joined the LP, the gentry was still in favor of agricultural capitalization and therefore voted for the DP (pp. 273-74). Indeed, Canip Yıldırım, a prominent second Young Kurd and 49'er, took an active role in the LP, although he is from one of the most influential pro-PRP families. Canip Yıldırım suggests that feudal families such as Ramanlis from Batman were not eager to break away from the DP but remained indecisive due to their allegiance to the Kurdish identity (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 126). Ultimately, the LP won 20% in Diyarbakır, yet the anti-democratic winner-takes-all system prevented the LP from having seats in the parliament except for Burdur. However, this political-methodological dispute between the Old Kurds and later generations will deepen during and after the trial of the 49ers as those who support the mainstream Turkish political parties, or, as it is called, "the parties of the establishment," and those who support the "Kurdistanî" parties in the future.

2.1.2.3. *İleri Yurt* (Advanced Homeland), *Hemşehri Dernekleri* (Hometown Associations) and *Ceride-i Dersim* (Journal of Dersim) – The First "Active" Kurdish "Socialization"

During the first five years of the 1950s, the Kurdish opposition showed unanimous support for the DP. Some Kurdish deputies were part of parliament, and the Kurdish press circle formed around Musa Anter continued to criticize the PRP. Invited by Yusuf Azizoğlu, Musa Anter moved permanently to Diyarbakır (Çamlıbel, 2010, p. 29). Following the 1954 elections, Anter collaborated with Nejat Cemiloğlu to publish the Eastern Post newspaper (*Şark Postası*) in 1954 in Diyarbakır. The newspaper initiated an

unwavering campaign against the PRP and gained immense popularity among Kurds. It was so well-received that it even attracted subscribers from Syria (Anter, 2010, p. 134). However, apart from the DP imagined by the Kurdish intellectuals, the LP's foundation and the new political path also manifested a discourse novelty in Kurdish thought. It would not be wrong to consider Anter and Yıldırım's takeover of *İleri Yurt* in 1958 as a milestone in this novelty. For Turkish ultranationalists, it was when "the Kurdism coming down from the mountains to the prairies" (Kılıç, 2007, p. 513).

İleri Yurt was a newspaper that had already been published and owned by Abdurrahman Efem Dolak. Although the newspaper depended on advertisement revenues to survive, it gained a unique position by including Musa Anter and Canip Yıldırım on its board. Edip Altınakar also worked as the newspaper's lawyer. The newspaper became more attractive due to the Kurdish words and sentences that Anter used throughout its pages. Furthermore, if the person being interviewed by Anter did not know Turkish, their statements were published in their native language (Ekinci, 2013, p. 288). Since the proclamation of the republic, there have been no signs of Kurdish in the public sphere. This made the recent development an extraordinary event for the Kurds. According to Yanarocak (2014), it was, in fact, the first Kurdish publication since the Dersim Rebellion (p. 139). According to Müslüm Yücel, there was a popular account in which, when asked whether the Kurdish language existed, the response was, "There is even a Kurdish newspaper published by Musa Anter in Diyarbakır (Yücel, 1993, p. 43)."

Ileri Yurt also had many followers in Kurdish provinces other than Diyarbakır. Anter's articles became a hit quickly and were adopted as a part of the popular language by its Kurdish audiences between 1958 and 1959. It would not be wrong to say that Anter became the literary trendsetter in Kurdistan in the late 50s. Yaşar Kaya, a law student in Istanbul, 49er, and a lifelong activist, witnessed that after Anter wrote, "I talked to God yesterday and told me not to confine our love to a single institution" in his column, people of Ağrı adopted the saying and used it in daily life (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 72). The increase in Anter's and *İleri Yurt*'s popularity made Ankara quite concerned and escalated the legal pressure on him. Nevertheless, it faced a backlash from the Kurds. In his memoir, Anter (2010) says,

> "The newspaper had transformed from a conventional publication into a revolutionary entity, attracting widespread attention. Daily lawsuits became commonplace, encouraging lawyers to travel considerable distances, even from Kars, to participate in the cases. The courtroom itself began to resemble a gathering place for rallies. Kurdish and leftist Turkish youth at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Istanbul and Ankara were protesting the pressures on us in Diyarbakır, organizing rallies and panels" (p. 142).

As Anter utters, the audience living in the West supported the *İleri Yurt*'s cause thanks to its subscription system extended to such metropolises, making it an intellectual propeller for Kurdish students in particular. Kaya expressed the popularity of the newspaper among Kurdish youth; "We were looking forward to the arrival of the newspaper (*İleri Yurt*) in Istanbul. Sometimes, the paper would not arrive for three or four consecutive days, while several days' volumes would arrive together on other occasions. Despite its mere two pages, the newspaper was always read with great interest (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 70)." The increasing interest among the youth was also seen in court documents. During his military service in Polatlı in 1959, Yavuz Çamlıbel sent a letter to Şerefhanoğlu saying that *İleri Yurt*'s editorial quality got better day by day. It became like a piece of jewelry that everybody showed high value for. Çamlıbel also mentioned his gratitude to *İleri Yurt* since it increased its political awareness of the Kurdish issue (Kutlay, 1994, p. 68).

A brief overview of Kurdish history will be presented through the story of *İleri Yurt*. A significant amount of effort was dedicated to acquiring copies of the newspaper during the study preparation. There are no copies of the newspaper in the National Library except those from 1957 – before Anter and Yıldırım's takeover. Canip Yıldırım Library of Ismail Beşikçi Foundation, donated by Canip Yıldırım, also does not include any volumes of the newspaper. I conducted a phone conversation with Dicle Anter, Musa Anter's son. He said that they could not retain copies of the newspaper. In situations where there was a police raid, they either destroyed the documents themselves to avoid being charged, or the officials confiscated and destroyed them. In an interview with Dilvin Karahan, daughter of Ali Karahan, stated that this newspaper was not found in the family archives, although he was a subscriber, as it is said in the court minutes. During an email

conversation with Malmîsanij, a renowned scholar of Kurdish history, he mentioned that while he was a refugee in Sweden in the 1980s, he expressed his desire to study a newspaper published in Diyarbakır during the Ottoman period. He asked a friend to obtain it from the Diyarbakır Provincial Public Library, and according to him, the library officials denied the availability of such publications since such materials in the library were transferred to Konya. He mocks the situation and calls it "the exile of old manuscripts." (Malmîsanij, 2023, para. 6). Interestingly, *İleri Yurt* newspaper is among the periodicals with shelf numbers 82 and 171, according to the Selçuk University Library's online database. However, it is only accessible to university students. I sent an e-mail to the librarian to ask for access and received no answer, unfortunately. Kerem Yavaşça's thesis on Musa Anter does not include any *İleri Yurt* articles except for the ones in the book Kımıl published by *Aram Yayınları*. I attempted to contact the Kurdish Institute of Paris through a colleague living there, as the institute arranged a symposium called "The 49's Case in its 50th Anniversary" in 2009; therefore, I considered the possibility that the copies we were looking for might be found here. However, the institute's members did not respond to our call.

While I hope *Ileri Yurt* volumes are available somewhere, I understand they may not be currently accessible. However, the question remains: How should we approach this situation? The historicist approach argues that it is impossible to comment on historical issues without documents, making it challenging to say anything about *İleri Yurt*. Nevertheless, is there any possibility for a minority group to create an archive while every single state institution has constantly oppressed it? *İleri Yurt* is mentioned in the memories of almost every Kurdish activist who witnessed the end of the 1950s, such as Kemal Burkay, the founder of the Socialist Party of Kurdistan (SPK) (Burkay, 2001, pp. 109-10). As mentioned above, young Kurdish activists of the late 50s claim that İleri Yurt was their primary source of information. It was subject to harsh criticism by the fervent supporters of Kemalism, such as İzzet Sedes and Falih Rıfkı Atay (Yavaşça, 2013, pp. 53-72). It was central to the crimes attributed to the 49'ers indictment. In addition, *İleri Yurt*'s contribution to Kurdish thought is evident, as many Kurdish activists wrote that reading Anter's articles inspired and made them aware of their identity. Therefore, I believe that being unable to find copies of *İleri Yurt*, a product of a period when the

Kurdish idea was rejected with pseudoscientific explanations and everything related to Kurdishness was considered an enemy of the state, gives more meaning to the newspaper. In short, the lack of newspaper copies is not a shortcoming in studying subaltern history but rather a suggestive advantage to show the intensity of state pressure upon a small group of Kurdish activists experienced in the 50s and onward.

It is necessary to place a particular focus on the atmosphere in the West for the Kurds during the *İleri Yurt* years. The Menderes government shut the Tigris Dorm down for political reasons in 1955 (Nergiz, 2021, p. 52). However, Kurdish students were still moving to Istanbul and Ankara to receive college education. While the tales of 1925, 1929, and 1937 might have triggered distressing stories in the minds of these individuals, it is essential to note that they have not themselves witnessed any instances of massacres. The image of a "brutal" and "punitive" state was not as disincentive as it was in the first generation of Young Kurds – except for the members of the "Dersim group" such as Sait Kırmızıtoprak and Yusuf Kaçar, who were from the same village where they experienced genocidal acts perpetrated by the Turkish Army (Akar, 1998, p. 44). They undoubtedly were eager to take more courageous actions. Kurdish students in need of such socialization had found each other in clubs known as *hemşehri* associations (Celik, 2002, p. 65). Nurettin Yılmaz, a 49'er and a law student in Ankara, founded the Cizre Cultural Association and did the same for his colleagues from Cizre in the late 1950s (Yılmaz, 2008, p. 39). Naci Kutlay, who was born in Ağrı a year after the suppression of the rebellion there and a 49er, worked in the Ağrı Student Organization and attempted to establish a dormitory for students from his city in the late 1950s (Kutlay, 1998, p. 47). The head of the Ağrı Student Organization was Mehmet Ali Aslan, also among the friend group. He would later become the lawyer of some 49ers (M. A. Aslan, 2022, p. 153). These young, energetic, and fearless college students were the very audience of *İleri Yurt*'s progressive discourse.

One of those *hemşehri* associations, maybe the most active one, was the Tunceli Cultural Association. It was founded in Ankara in 1956, and a branch was established in Istanbul in January 1957. Haydar Özdemir, the founder of the association, was a friend of Musa Anter (Aslan, 2023, para. 7). Along with him, Sait Kırmızıtoprak who was one of the

most striking 49'ers, guerrilla warfare activist and theoretician in the late 60s, was among the founders of the association (Atılgan, 2016, p. 597). Shortly after the opening, a group of young college students from Dersim began publishing the *Ceride-i Dersim* newspaper in March 1957 (Anagür, 1957, p. 1). Humorously, they wrote that the newspaper's administration was in the Munzur Mountains; the owner is in the loony bin, its objective was to bring laughter to people, and the subscription fee was to participate in the Tunceli night." The main agenda of the magazine was politics and humor. In the first issue, a columnist, using the alias Zırto (1957), wrote a satirical article comparing parliamentary debates to boxing matches (p. 4).

Haydar Aksu, a law school student and 49'er, was an active writer in the magazine along with Kırmızıtoprak. In addition to them, Hıdır Benzer was also among the publishers. He was later interrogated in the trial of the 49ers for hosting one of those so-called illegal meetings in his home (Temel, 2022, para. 12). He will be one of the lawyers representing the suspects in the TKDP (Kurdish Democratic Party of Türkiye)-Antalya Case in 1968, alongside Ziya Acar, a fellow member of the 49ers (Arslan, 2019, p. 7). Doğan Kılıç and Ali Anagür, who were subjects of another politically motivated trial following the 49ers and named the 23ers, were also on the editorial board. Kazım Yıldız would later become among the founders of Hevra Publications, a Kurdish-language publishing house based in Konstanz in the early 1970s (Burkay, 2001, p. 373).

The magazine was associated with some 49er defendants from Ankara. Naci Kutlay and Ziya Şerefhanoğlu were mentioned in *Ceride-i Dersim*'s article "Who is Who" in February 1959. Their image was quite positive. In the article, it says, "Finally, God created Naci Kutlay" for the first and "Such a brother!" for Şerefhanoğlu ("Ceride-i Dersim", 19.02.1959, p. 4). Kutlay also wrote an article for *Ceride-i Dersim* about his first meeting with the people of Dersim. During his high school years, Kevork, an Armenian student, faced physical assault from classmates. Şirzat, a student from Dersim, could not tolerate the injustice and took the risk of getting beaten, bravely intervening to rescue his friend Kevork. When asked by Kutlay about his actions, Şirzat explained that he believes people should not be subjected to insults based on their religion or nationality, emphasizing the importance of standing up against injustice (Kutlay, 1959, p. 6).

Kırmızıtoprak stands out among the writers due to his scathing satires. His satirical pieces are mostly politically motivated. In his article “Parade,” featured in the first release, he rants about the inflation of parliamentary candidates in Dersim: " Undoubtedly, Tunceli desperately needs cultural and economic development; however, unfortunately, it is impossible to elect a plethora of intellectuals, grocers, landlords, sayyids, and Korean veterans altogether” (Kırmızıtoprak, 1957, p. 4).

Dersim dwellers were also aware of the journal to a certain extent. Munzur Çem saw Ceride-i Dersim for the first time in 1958 as a teenager when Yusuf Kaçar brought it to his village. In his memoir, Çem (2021) mentioned that he was impressed by the usage of Zazaki words in a newspaper, and he thought about the beauty of thinking and writing in her native language, which triggered his Kurdish consciousness (p. 181). It would be extreme to claim that an amateur humor newspaper was the voice of the Kurdish masses. However, it is reasonable to assume that a few word games in such publications were the “weapons of the weak” for the Kurdish youngsters and gave them a certain degree of self-confidence during a time when the Kurdish language was heavily suppressed.

To sum up, the late 1950s marked the emergence of a new generation of Kurds. This generation was characterized by their focus on social relations based on the shared culture, disregard for the fears of their predecessors, education in leading Western institutions, and a keen interest in global affairs. These youngsters, disturbed by the backwardness in their homeland, believed that education and economic investment could solve the issues in the East. However, the rising Menderes authoritarianism inflicted on all dissidents, which led to their imprisonment, ultimately paved the way for the emergence of more radical ideologies among them.

2.2. Internal and External Factors Leading to the Trial

2.2.1. External Factors

2.2.1.1. Postcolonial Wave in the World and the Kurdish Students' Society in Europe

The 1950s was the age of a surge in national liberation movements, particularly in Africa and Asia, as many colonized countries broke free from colonial rule and gained independence. National liberation movements were fueled by an ardent desire to end colonial domination and gained great momentum after the Second World War. Colonized nations sought to reclaim their sovereignty and break away from the political, economic, and cultural control imposed by Western powers. As the popularity of socialism grew following the Soviet victory, its economic program, which aimed to eradicate the capital-based market, was adopted to end colonial exploitation and was embraced by the impoverished third world (Anderson, 2002, pp. 14-5). Influential leaders emerged as the faces of these movements, rallied the masses, and attracted their support for independence. Mao Zedong's revolution in 1949, following a long-lasting civil war and a foreign genocidal invasion of China, played a huge role in shaping the course of their respective liberation struggles (Frazier, 2015, p. 16). Despite its methodological uniqueness, India's successful struggle for independence, led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was another inspiring moment for the anti-colonialist movements (Bhatt, 2025, p. 203).

Political parties emerged as the driving forces behind the movements, which articulated the people's aspirations and pushed for nationalistic goals under umbrella organizations. The African National Congress, for instance, orchestrated the Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws in 1952, marking the inaugural instance of a mobilization challenging apartheid that eventually led to the formation of the South African Congress of Democrats (Mandela, 1990, pp. 92-3). The National Liberation Front initiated an armed struggle against French colonial rule in Algeria in 1954, whilst the Vietnamese military victory at

Dien Bien Phu became a turning point in the First Indochina War against French rule and inspired the anti-colonialist movements worldwide. The 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia brought together leaders from 29 Asian and African nations (Acharya & Tan, 2008, p. 79). The conference marked a significant moment of solidarity among newly independent or soon-to-be-independent nations, emphasizing the principles of non-alignment and collective resistance against colonialism. Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana became the first country to gain independence from colonial rule in sub-Saharan Africa in 1957 (Akonor, 2013, p. 18).

While national liberation movements were prevalent in global politics, European universities became a popular destination for students from the third world. Studying in Europe was not a novelty. Many pan-African movement leaders, like Nkrumah, had also received education in the West and returned to their countries with novel nationalist ideas (Gerits, 2015, p. 956). However, the persistent emphasis on human rights and dignity became more popular in the post-WWII era, as well as the dominant socialist discourse and its idea of the internationalist struggle against the system liberated colonial students from the idea of prolonging the struggle until returning to their homelands. Instead, they were involved in many umbrella youth organizations with socialist and anti-colonialist agendas, such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS) (Laqua, 2021, p. 178).

Meanwhile, a Kurdish student network was slowly forming in Europe. First, Kurdish intellectuals like Kamuran Bedirhan and some students relocated to France after the end of the French mandate in Syria in 1946. They somehow created a hub for future Kurdish students there. Second, after the Second World War, the growing interest of Middle Eastern states in universities as crucial agents in modernizing their societies coincided with a rise in the number of students – and, of course, Kurdish students – studying abroad. Lastly, Middle Eastern students were drawn to countries like Poland, East Germany, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia, which began hosting Kurdish students in the late 1950s (Gorgas, 2021, pp. 171-72).

The Kurdish Students' Society in Europe (KSSE) was established in Wiesbaden in 1956 and is worth looking into to understand the Trial of the 49ers. The association's president

was Ismet Cherif Vanly, the general secretary was Dar ol Salehi, and the editor-in-chief was Salah Saadalla. Following its second congress in London, it held its third in Munich in August 1958, less than a month after the revolution in Iraq. Meanwhile, the association started to publish a periodical named *Kurdistan*. The association had a few objectives, including strengthening the bond among Kurdish students in Europe and organizing regular meetings, promoting solidarity among Kurdish students, developing Kurdish culture, introducing Kurdish culture, people, country, and conditions to the world, collaborating with students of different countries in line with common goals and interests, and publishing regular publications. The association had one hundred members in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Forty of the fifty Kurdish students studying in Britain then had the association's membership (The National Archives of the UK (TNA), Foreign Office (FO), 1110/1259, 09.02.1959, p. 2). KSSE later opened a branch in the USA in November 1958. In 1959, a branch established illegally in Türkiye was comprised entirely of Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish students. This branch was led by İbrahim Mamhıdır, with Cemal Alemdar, Hesen Şetevi, and Nejad Remzi serving on the board (Temel, 2015, p. 146). However, this branch had no Kurdish members from Türkiye. For example, there was only one student from Türkiye among the delegates of the third congress, and his name was Osman Gulshin. Gulshin's presence must have made the other students at KSSE happy. Chairman Vanly greeted Gulshin at his address since he was the first representative from Türkiye ("Kurdistan", November 1958, p. 5).

It was widely assumed by the British that KSSE was an organization infiltrated by communists. British intelligence believed that the association's former and current presidents and the editor of Kurdistan were communist sympathizers (TNA, FO1110/1259., 06.04.1959, p. 2). KSSE was registered at the same address as the Iraqi Student Association (ISA). The British thought that the ISA was under the communists' control and that KSSE was a unit within the ISA. Moreover, there were pro-Soviet articles in Kurdistan praising its contribution to Kurdish national culture. KSSE even sent a letter to thank Khruschev for the swift cultural progress the Kurds experienced while millions of Kurds were deprived of their fundamental rights ("Kurdistan", November 1958, p. 10). However, this is a wrong assumption. KSSE had problems with the Iraqi leadership

regarding its interest in minority politics, as Kurdish nationalism could weaken working-class unity. Thus, Kurdish students who were members of communist parties from Iraq, Iran, and Syria initially opposed KSSE's foundation (Sheikhmous, 2020, pp. 30-1). In addition, Vanly and the Kurdish delegation, including Kamal Fuad, later the founder of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, argued with Abd al-Karim Qasim over the right to self-determination during a visit to Iraq. Vanly was declared persona non grata and deported in 24 hours (Kurt, 2011, para. 14). However, there were members of KSSE from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Naturally, there must be some communist members of KSSE. As far as it is known, Abdurrahman Ghassemlou lived in Prague, where IUS's headquarters were. It seems like these two student associations likely formed out of camaraderie in line with the anti-colonial sentiment of the 1950s as many Iraqi Arab students attended WFDY's seventh festival held in Vienna in 1959, and a year later, Baghdad hosted the seventh IUS congress with Qasim's initiation (Tejel, 2017, pp. 144-45).

KSSE had established connections with the top Western orientalists and Kurdologists through the *Kurdistan* newspaper. Stig Wikander gave an interview for Kurdistan magazine, while Pierre Rondot, a French general and a supporter of the Kurds, was among those who sent a celebratory letter to the journal's launch. Rondot served in the French mission in the Syria mandate along with Roger Lescot who later wrote a Kurdish grammar book with Celadet Ali Bedirkhan (Gorgas, 2014, p. 851). Soviet Kurdologist Basil Nikitin wrote that the idea of ensuring cultural cooperation of Kurdish students abroad was excellent and sent his regards (Nikitine, 1958, p. 16). Nikitin also wrote articles for later issues. Another Soviet Kurdologist and a prominent Kurdish intellectual, Qanate Kurdo was also a regular contributor to Kurdistan.

Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrew the Hashemite monarchy by a coup d'etat and turned Iraq into a republic in 1958. Known as the 14 July Revolution, it signaled a new era for the political sphere of the Middle East. First, Qasim allowed Mustafa Barzani to return to Iraq from a decade-long exile in the USSR. Then, he declared in the constitution that the Kurds and Arabs were the constituent elements of Iraq (Stansfield, 2006, p. 4). As expected, KSSE cadres supported the revolution wholeheartedly. The second issue of

Kurdistan was printed for the third congress held in Munich a month after Qasim's takeover.[9] In its editorial, the journal Kurdistan applauded the Iraqi people and its army for their hard-won victory against the former regime, which is not only a triumph for Arab nationalism but also for the Kurdish people, who have suffered dramatically since the Ottoman Empire's death and therefore reserving the strong Arab-Kurdish unity and defending the republic are paramount duties for all" ("Kurdistan", August 1958, p. 3).

The third issue of Kurdistan was published in November 1958, as decided by the third congress in Munich. The issue's cover featured a photo of the Baghdad meeting between Qasim and Barzani. The newspaper contained a more comprehensive preparation, which included the association congress's decisions and texts prepared in line with those decisions. These texts were quite radical compared to the Kurdish opposition in Türkiye. For example, KSSE stated that the July 14 Revolution freed Southern Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, leading to a new constitution recognizing Arabs and Kurds as partners with national rights, which marks a crucial step toward Kurdish liberation and will impact the Kurdish movement in Türkiye and Iran ("Kurdistan", November 1958, p. 3). They prepared French, Turkish, and Kurdish sections in addition to the English language. In the Turkish and Kurdish sections, KSSE addressed the Kurdish people and advocated for organizing and continuing the struggle for Kurdish freedom while leaving class distinctions aside ("Kurdistan", November 1958, p. 28).

KSSE's call in Turkish and Kurdish was a clear sign of its interest in the struggle for the rights of the Kurds, who were under the yoke of other countries. Saadalla (1959) says in the newspaper that Kurds must assist the struggles of their brethren in Iran, Türkiye, and Syria, just as Iraqi Arabs support those fighting in Algiers, Aden, and Oman (p. 5). KSSE targeted Türkiye's oppressive policies towards the Kurds and attempted to put the Turkish government under international pressure by utilizing the power of the IUS ad hoc. As a youth organization, they aimed to raise awareness about the oppression endured by the Kurds through propaganda campaigns empowered by IUS. To achieve their goal, they

[9] Omar Sheikhmous states that the next congress date had already been set during the second one.

applied for membership. IUS' stance towards KSSE has been quite positive since the beginning. CIA believed that the current situation in the Middle East has significant potential for IUS, and it would use such potential as one of its primary propaganda materials at its upcoming fifth congress held in Beijing (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA-RDP78-00915R000900200013-6, 21.081958, p. 3). At the congress, IUS condemned the Turkish Government's policy towards the five million Kurds in Türkiye and supported the Kurdish demand to study in their national language. IUS even published the communique of KSSE's third congress and provided printed materials for the association, although KSSE had not yet become a full member ("Kurdistan", April 1959, p. 21).

In February 1959, the association sent a letter to Menderes during the Greco-Turkish Conference in Zurich. In the letter, KSSE said five million Kurds in Türkiye suffered from dire economic conditions and were deprived of national rights, including education in their native language, which was a violation of the Lausanne Treaty. The treaty had granted non-Turkish elements cultural rights and freedom of expression, although the Turkish delegation, headed by İnönü, asserted that Kurds would have absolute rights. KSSE also underlined the fact that the Kurdish population is 30 times larger than the number of Turks in Cyprus. While the Turkish government negotiates with its Greek counterpart to resolve the Cyprus Question, it must also fulfill the promises made in Lausanne ("Kurdistan", April 1959, p. 10).

Meanwhile, KSSE announced that an underground students' union in Türkiye had been formed and wished to strengthen relations with the main association in Europe ("Kurdistan", April 1959, p. 18). In his speech, President Vanly addressed Kurdish students from Türkiye who attended the fourth congress held in Vienna in July 1959 and expressed gratitude to them for attending despite the oppressive regime they lived in. But then, a telegram from the Committee of Kurdish Students in Türkiye expressed their regret for not being able to attend the congress in Vienna ("Kurdistan", November 1959, p. 13).

These conflicting statements arouse doubt. In the accusations later made by the Turkish state, no one is alleged to have had direct contact with KSSE except Ziya Şerefhanoğlu.

Yaşar Kaya and Faik Savaş were accused of introducing Reşit Arif to their friends during his visit to Türkiye. Reshid Arif was an honorary member of the society ("Kurdistan", 1961, p. 4). Nevertheless, there is no mention of them traveling or sending letters abroad. It is claimed in the trial that Hüseyin Sarıtaş and Hüseyin Adıgüzel, two Kurdish college students, attended the fourth congress of KSSE from Türkiye. Hüseyin Adıgüzel was believed to have gone to Europe with Ziya Şerefhanoğlu and Mustafa Nuri Direkçigil's[10] aid and sent politically motivated letters to Fevzi Avşar[11] and Naci Kutlay. Nevertheless, both accusations were dropped. Sarıtaş's activities were asked to Canip Yıldırım during the trial as Sarıtaş sent a letter to him from abroad. Yıldırım stated in his defense that the letter was a false flag operation planned by Turkish intelligence and that he delivered the strange letter to the security forces right after he got it. Naci Kutlay, accused of duplicating the decisions of KSSE's fourth congress, said he does not know anyone from Türkiye who had contacted KSSE before the trial process, including Osman Gulshin – the third congress attendee mentioned in Kurdistan journal (N. Kutlay, personal communication, 17.03.2024). As mentioned earlier, this letter can only be sent by the illegal branch led by Ibrahim Mamhıdır, a Kurdish student from Iraq, and had no relation with some 49ers except friendship.

The Menderes government decided to take measures against KSSE. In April 1959, the Turkish ambassador requested British authorities to share information on "the existence of any so-called Kurdish Association in the United Kingdom." Muharrem Nuri Birgi, the Turkish ambassador to the UK, said he was aware of KSSE's activities, such as congresses. British officials believed the Turkish government pressed him to receive information immediately (TNA, FO1110/1259., 02.04.1959, p. 2). The British Foreign Office assisted the Turkish embassy in sharing the intelligence. Birgi expressed his discomfort with KSSE's application to the United Nations on the solution for the maltreatment of the Kurds in Türkiye and Iran, and they were not obliged to take any notice of it. Ross assured Birgi that he would inform the Turkish embassy about the

[10] Mustafa Nuri Direkçigil was a health inspector from Diyarbakır and later a 49er.
[11] Fevzi Avşar was a medical student in İstanbul from Kars and later a 49er.

nationality of Tahsin Mohammed Amin, who sent the letter to the UN on behalf of the KSSE. Birgi also asked about Amin being prevented from engaging in further activities. In the minutes, Ross notes his belief that if Amin were a citizen of Türkiye, the Turkish government could potentially prevent him from staying in the country (TNA, FO371/140683., 13.05.1959, p. 5). While knowing the fact that – in Birgi's own words – "the Kurdish movement was much stronger outside the area than inside," it seems like Menderes' Türkiye was keen on taking measures against the KSSE as a way to create a new enemy for itself in the face of worsening economic and political conditions.

2.2.1.2. 14 July Revolution in 1958 and the Barzani Leadership in Iraqi Kurdistan

This section will focus on two points based on the brief history of Iraq between the end of the First World War and the 14 July Revolution. First, it will examine how Barzani's decade-long exile to the USSR laid the foundations of Türkiye's "Kurdish nationalism is equal to communism" formula while briefly mentioning the history of the Iraqi Kurds. Second, it will explain why Qasim's cooperative and inclusive Kurdish policy alarmed Türkiye.

Britain drew new boundaries in the Middle East by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The Kurds, dispersed across three newly formed states, found themselves divided and marginalized, with their aspirations for autonomy primarily ignored. The British administration favored Sunni Arab elites and neglected Kurdish demands for self-governance (Bengio, 2018, p. 10). The 1921 Cairo Conference further solidified British support for Arab rule in Iraq, exacerbating Kurdish grievances (Sharp, 2008, pp. 16-7). Britain first appointed Faisal I as the king of Iraq in 1921, later allowing its independence in 1932, the first modern Arab sovereign state (Be'eri, 1982, p. 69). In response to the Iraqi government's British-backed Arabization policies and centralization efforts, the Kurds launched a series of rebellions in 1919 and 1922 under Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji and, in 1931, led by Ahmad Barzani. However, they were eventually suppressed, leading to the further marginalization of the Kurds (Bruinessen, 2000, p. 49).

However, internal dissent often challenged the legitimacies of the kingdom and mandate, primarily by constant political instability fueled by military coups and socioeconomic troubles stemming from different ethnic and religious groups. For example, Bakr Sidqi led the first coup attempt against al-Hashimi's cabinet in 1936. Sidqi was assassinated in 1937 by a dissident rank-and-file soldier, and the junta collapsed subsequently. The attempt highlighted growing discontent within the military and dissatisfaction with the monarchy's policies (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2012, pp. 45-8). Five years later, Prime Minister Rashid Ali Al-Gaylani, with support from pro-Nazi factions of the Iraqi army, staged a coup against the pro-British government led by Regent Abdul Ilah in the middle of the Second World War. The coup led to the eruption of a month-long Anglo-Iraqi War, with British forces intervening to restore the pro-British government, exiling Al-Gaylani and liquidating the fascist quadrumvirate known as Golden Square (Wien, 2014, pp. 1-2).

As mentioned before, the Second World War marked a monumental change in Kurdish history. The Republic of Mahabad, the first modern Kurdish nation-state, was founded in Iranian Kurdistan following the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Persia. The government sought support from the Soviet Union, particularly. Qazi Muhammed led the government to take control of Kurdish cities like Bukan, Naqada, and Ushanviya for a year (McDowall, 2021, p. 248). The revolution in Mahabad inevitably inspired the Iraqi Kurds. Many Iraqi Kurdish volunteer militias under Mustafa Barzani joined the newly formed republic. Mustafa Barzani became the chief of the Kurdish general staff and founded the KDP there (Çandar, 2012, p. 69). After the republic collapsed, Persian authorities executed Muhammad, and Mustafa Barzani fled to the USSR to avoid persecution. Despite its short duration, the Republic of Mahabad remains a significant symbol of Kurdish aspirations for self-determination and independence.

Kurdish immigrants in the USSR requested education and were provided with teachers based on their abilities. Some were trained in carpentry, agriculture, or other artisanal activities. Those who completed their education started working in factories, while some continued their education in higher institutions and pursued geology, science, and economics degrees (Pelletiere, 1984, p. 122). Mustafa Barzani lived in Tashkent for a

while and moved to Moscow in 1954. He studied at the Moscow Academy of Languages. According to Mitrokhin archives, Barzani was in contact with the KGB and codenamed RAIS by Soviet intelligence (Andrew, 2014, pp. 175-76).

It is uncertain whether Mustafa Barzani had any ties to the Kremlin as a spy. Ferdinand Hennerbichler points out several factors that contradict this assumption. First, the title "Rais" was commonly used to denote leadership in Kurdish merely; thus, it does not necessarily indicate Barzani. Second, Barzani received financial aid from various foreign entities to advance Kurdish national interests, not only from the USSR. Third, and related to the second, Barzani consistently maintained diverse contacts with neighboring states and global powers to advocate for Kurdish rights and preserve tribal influence. This strategy involved labeling adversaries as "spies" from his early international engagements in the 1940s. Last and foremost, witnesses agree that Barzani never embraced communist ideology, even after spending a decade in exile in the USSR (Hennerbichler, 2018, pp. 251-52). For example, in his days-long series of interviews with Barzani during the First Iraqi-Kurdish War, Dana Adams Schmidt observed that all Kurdish refugees were grateful to Russia to some extent, as almost all of them had obtained many skills; however, their tribal pride and religious sentiments made them immune to political indoctrination. Barzani also assured Schmidt that although he spent twelve years in Russia, he did not embrace the communist ideology (Schmidt, 1977, pp. 32-3).

Despite Barzani's refusal to adopt communist ideology, the relationship between Barzani and the USSR has always attracted Türkiye's attention. Türkiye thought that the Kurdish movement and communism went hand in hand. Bezci (2020) says

> "The Kurdish question was often a more serious concern for Turkish intelligence; thus, the Turks needed to persuade their Western allies that Kurdish activities posed a serious threat to the Western Alliance if they wanted to obtain support for anti-Kurdish counter-subversive operations" (pp. 175-76).

The Turkish state's discourse to its Western allies paralleled Bezci's observation. It seemed like a "Kurdish-communist conspiracy" was haunting Türkiye. For example, during a meeting between British Chancellor Arthur and İsmail Soysal over peace congresses organized by the Cominform in 1953, Arthur said the embassy was ready to

share information about Türkiye's concerns. First and foremost, Soysal wanted to receive documents on “communism disguised as Kurdism, or Kurdism disguised as communism in the Middle East, and specifically the secret activity of Mullah Barzani under the command of Moscow.” Interestingly, while Arthur did not comment on many of the documents requested by the Turks, he needed to say that he was an expert on Barzani since they had met in Iraq three times. He promised to discuss this issue with Turkish officials again in the future (Turkish Diplomatic Archives, TDA, 571/35708-140943-3., 03.10.1953, pp. 1-2). Arthur's willingness to comfort the Turks regarding Barzani, among other issues, was probably due to his knowledge of the Turkish government’s paranoia about the Kurds.

On the other hand, Turkish authorities might have genuinely convinced themselves that the Kurdish-communist threat was real, contrary to Bezci’s statement that considers Turkish officials' attitude purely pragmatic. Some incidents put the Turkish officials in kind of a ridiculous situation over their Kurdish-communism paranoia. For instance, the archival document in the Turkish archives concerns an imaginary tribe from Sulaymaniyah. According to the intelligence, Hasan Agha, the head of the Havi tribe, visited Syria and met with Kadri Cemilpaşa, Celadet Bedirkhan, Nuri Dersimi, Cigerxwin, and many other Kurdish activists, including some Armenian communists present there in 1951. Hasan Agha said he came to talk on behalf of Barzani to assure them Barzani had 200 thousand armed militias and their Russian friends would assist them to establish Kurdistan (TDA, 35723/141016-167 *Suriye`de komünizm ve kürtçülük faaliyetleri*, 05.16.1951, pp. 1-2). Turkish officials ordered an investigation on the Havi tribe and Hasan Agha immediately. A month later, the Turkish embassy in Baghdad replied that neither a tribe named Havi nor a chief named Hasan Agha existed in Sulaymaniyah (TDA, 35723-141016-165., 06.11.1951, p. 1).

The climax of this period came with the 14th of July Revolution in 1958, which overthrew the Hashemite monarchy and established the Republic of Iraq. Led by General Abd al-Karim Qasim, the revolution reflected widespread discontent with the existing political order and aspirations for social justice, national sovereignty, and political independence. It promised radical reforms and greater inclusiveness. Kurds initially hoped that the

revolution would address their grievances and pave the way for autonomy. First, the new constitution was promulgated two weeks after the revolution. The third article of the constitution assured that the Iraqi society consisted of Arabs and Kurds, and their national rights were granted (Edmonds, 1971, p. 148). Moreover, the new Iraqi flag included a yellow Kurdish sun in the middle, a coat of arms with an Arab sword, and a Kurdish dagger, highlighting the Kurdish-Arab fraternity (Natali, 2005, p. 49). Qasim offered amnesty and allowed Barzani to return to Iraq by September (Rubin, 2007, p. 359).

The statements made and actions taken by high officials in Iraq exacerbated Türkiye's Kurdish-communist conspiracy doubts. Iraq began questioning the previous regime's non-aggression pacts signed with her neighbors. First, Qasim questions the validity of the Saadabad Pact, a non-aggression pact that included Türkiye, Iran, and Afghanistan, signed before the Second World War (Akhtar, 1969, p. 218). The pact was dysfunctional since there was no longer a war threat after WWII. Yet in article seven, Signatory parties were supposed to prevent armed groups from forming or acting within their borders, and groups must not subvert institutions, disturb order or security of any other party's territory (Başkaya, 2018, p. 118). Article Seven was further deepened, and the Baghdad Pact, also known as CENTO, was signed in 1955. The newly signed pact granted member countries the right to conduct operations on each other's territory in case of a threat. However, CENTO's credibility was also repudiated by Qasim (Athanassopoulou, 2017, p. 11). In one of his speeches, Colonel Mahdawi, President of the People's Court in Baghdad, implied that the Kurdish people up to Iskenderun would unite with Iraq by 1960. KSSE published an article hailing the idea (Saadalla, 1959, p. 7). Mahdawi was a hardcore pro-Soviet official against Nasser's pan-Arabist clique among Iraqi officials. He was referred to as a "card-carrying communist" in American intelligence documents (Citino, 2017, p. 177). Türkiye now viewed the situation in Iraq as a matter of internal security.

Even though it was pretty limited because of the Kurdish taboo in Türkiye, the Barzani, Kurdism, and communism trilogy gradually began to come to the fore in the Turkish press following the achievement of Kurdish rights in Iraq. Bilal Şimşir, a young academician and later Turkish state apologist and diplomat, published the article series "Arabs and Kurdism" and "Soviet Russia and Kurdism" in the famous Forum magazine concerning

the recent developments in 1959[12]. According to Şimşir, the pro-Kurdish attitude of the 14 July Revolution stemmed from the fact that many Kurds were in the high cadres of the new administration, including Qasim, in addition to his aim to find a broader supporter base in the ideologically fragmented leading elite (Şimşir, 1959b, p. 11). There were also some novelties for the Kurds in the Soviet Union in terms of cultural rights, and the Turkish side could easily hear from the other side of the border. The Yerevan-based *Riya Teze* (New Path) newspaper of the Soviet Kurds had been published since the early 1930s. Radio Yerevan added Kurdish to its broadcasting languages list in 1956 (Açikyildiz, 2014, p. 70). The first series examined the chronology and the extent of Russo-Kurdish contact. Şimşir believed contact between the two had improved sharply during and after the Second World War. In addition to the Kurdish-language broadcasting on Radio Yerevan, the establishment of a state-owned institute and Soviet funding to the *Centre des Etudes Kurdes* (Kurdish Studies Center), led by Kamuran Bedirkhan, were clear signs of communist interests in the Kurdish matter. The USSR planted a time bomb named Barzani in Baghdad and waited to detonate it at an opportune time (Şimşir, 1959a, p. 13).

Avni Doğan[13], who was the last general inspector in Kurdish regions, published an article titled "Alarm Bells" after Nasser met with Barzani and voiced support for Kurdish independence. When Doğan wrote these articles, he was one of PRP's leading executives (Burkay, 2001, p. 111). Doğan criticized the superficiality of not uttering the words Kurdism and Kurdistan while the Kurdish movement was on the rise worldwide (Doğan, 1958, p. 1).

Doğan claimed that there was a lack of trust between the government and the Kurdish people, which made it easier for the Kurdists to stir up the region. The state officials penalized Kurdish people for speaking their language instead of teaching them Turkish. Such actions caused further resentment while the Kurdish separatist threat abroad was on

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[12] Turkish intelligence officials asked Prof. Fehmi Yavuz, dean of Ankara Faculty of Political Sciences, to obtain information about Şimşir after he had published his Kurdism series. Learning that he was a Balkan immigrant, they left satisfied. (Şimşir, 2009, p. 11).

[13] Doğan was also a figure known from the Muğlalı Incident as a high official, although he did not participate in the massacre (Beşikçi, 1991, p.81)

the rise. Kurdish intellectuals like Bedirhanzades were active in Paris, Switzerland, and Russia. The USSR had been training Barzani and his militias in guerrilla warfare in camps established in the Caucasus for a decade. They also trained imams in Sulaymaniyah to work and preach in Kurdish villages in Türkiye and Iran (Doğan, 1958b, pp. 1-5). To prevent the increasing Kurdish activities in Türkiye, a non-partisan program should be prepared to solve the social problems of the cities in the East. Facilities such as roads and hospitals should be established for citizens' benefit, and cultural activities and schools should be opened to teach the Turkish language (Doğan, 1958c, p. 5). In sum, Doğan advocated continuing Türkiye's traditional assimilationist policies but expressed that they should be implemented more softly.

Barzani's return created excitement among the Kurdish students and intellectuals in Türkiye, mainly in Istanbul, Ankara, and Diyarbakır. However, it was almost impossible to observe this public sphere due to political pressures. However, it still caused great interest and a national awakening in the Kurdish student and intellectual community in Istanbul, Ankara, and Diyarbakır. It encouraged them to form social circles to discuss ongoing developments (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 65). Abdurrahman Dolak, the owner of *İleri Yurt* newspaper, made a radical and unexpected decision and tried to go to Iraq to interview Barzani. For this purpose, he would first go to Cizre and then pass the Tigris to arrive in Southern Kurdistan. Nurettin Yılmaz and his uncle helped him to cross the river. According to Yılmaz, Dolak's perilous decision was equivalent to meeting with Öcalan today. Dolak was captured and arrested during his attempt. In addition to Dolak's capture, Yılmaz would be accused of assisting Dolak in collecting money on behalf of the KDP and Barzani (Yılmaz, 2008, pp. 40-3).

2.2.2. Internal Factors

2.2.2.1. Colonel Dabak Rebellion in Iraq, Asım Eren's Interpellation, and Kurdish Students' Telegram Protest

The year 1959 was a difficult start for Qasim when a military coup attempt took place in Mosul in March, commanded by Colonel Abdul Wahab al-Shawwaf. Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) supporters were present at that time in the city, who came to a rally and somehow found themselves in clashes against a coup attempt. Kurdish militias assisted the communists and pro-Qasim forces during days-long clashes. The suppression of the mutiny was harsh, and many civilians lost their lives. Al-Shaawwaf and his staff were executed immediately. (Hunt, 2005, p. 80).

Turcoman Colonel Mustafa Dabak initiated a rebellion in Kirkuk a month after al-Shawwaf's attempt, which was eventually quelled (Kızılyaprak, 2005, p. 183). Once again, ICP supporters and Kurdish militias played a role in the suppression. Turkish public opinion was furious about the ongoing situation. The Menderes government sent a diplomatic note expressing its concern about the worsening conditions and mass murder rumors of the Turkman population in Kirkuk. Iraq replied to the Turkish note immediately, saying that the murderous act upon Turkmans and thousands of deaths were false ("Akşam", 12.04.1959, p. 5). A month before Türkiye's note, the CIA Intelligence Bulletin reported that Soviet and Iraqi officials had agreed on the return of 500 more Kurds to Iraq – by far the largest group of returnees as a sign of promoting a Kurdish-Arab coalition to strengthen Qasim's power (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA-RDP79T00975A004400040001-8., 18.03.1959, p. 1). Americans believed that the situation in Iraq was getting worse. The CIA received unconfirmed reports on smuggled Soviet weapons entering Iran through Iraqi Kurdistan and on the existence of a strangely high number of Iraqi Kurds in the city of Mahabad due to arms smuggling. CIA officials believed that the Soviet Union aimed to extend its influence in the Middle East through the Kurds. They recommended a "highest priority inter-agency collection effort" to gather comprehensive data on the Kurdish issue, including concerns of other Kurdish-inhabited Middle Eastern countries, on April 21, 1959 (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA-

RDP79R00904A000500010090-9, 21.04.1959, p. 1). Allen W. Dulles, Director of the CIA at the time, asserted that the state of affairs in Iraq was "the most dangerous in the world" and suggested that the Communists were poised to seize total control in late April. (Smolansky, 1967, p. 297)

The anti-Kurd atmosphere in Türkiye was on the rise in April 1959. PRP's Niğde deputy Asım Eren was infamous among the Kurdish youth then. He was a retired general known for his relentless personality, nicknamed Rommel (Birgit, 2006, p. 53). First, he asked for Abdülmelik Fırat's discharge from the assembly for not completing his military service on April 3 (*T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi*, 1959, p. 290). *Ulus* published Eren's polemic in the headline ("Ulus", 04.04.1959, p. 1). Four days after the Fırat incident, Eren formally asked the foreign affairs minister about the current situation in Kirkuk with bizarre word choices:

> "The armed attacks and plunder of the Communist-oriented Kurds mastered by Barzani in Iraq since July 14, 1958, on Turkish-inhabited areas are noteworthy. (...) I believe that you agree with me in not being willing to sacrifice the political fate of Turkish brothers, who remain under foreign rule, to a clear policy of destruction. Therefore, I would like to ask and demand what urgent political, social, cultural, and economic measures our government will take to end this situation and, if necessary, whether it will exercise retaliation in kind" ("Ulus", 09.04.1959, p. 5)

Eren's request to parliament had a shock effect on the Kurdish people. He not only pointed to the communist Kurds under Barzani as the mere responsible for the ongoing clashes but also made no clear indication of whom to retaliate against. Kurdish public opinion perceived Eren's statement as a call for a massacre against Kurds at home. Eventually, the genocidal undertone of Eren's statement led Kurdish students to organize a telegram protest. Signed in April 1959 by 102 Kurdish college students, the telegram was a criticism of the deliberate alienation and dehumanization of the Kurdish people. In response, Eren claimed that those who criticized him were irreligious, unpatriotic, and servants of Moscow. ("Vatan", 13.04.1959, p.1) ("Ulus", 13.04.1959, p. 1).

Yaşar Kaya was among the protest's organizers. He explained how they decided and acted in his memoirs. The idea for the protest was formulated in Ziya Şerefhanoğlu's office. Although Kaya was scared that he would face severe consequences, he delivered the statement to the press, leaving copies at the offices of *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Akşam*, and *Ekspres* newspapers in Cağaloğlu. Following this event, Medet Serhat nicknamed him Castro for his bravery and continued to use throughout his life (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 84).

Meanwhile, the Turkish media was alarmed by the increasing communist takeover threat in Iraq, which coincided with the telegram protest. The return of Kurdish immigrants to Iraq found massive coverage in Turkish media. *Vatan*

reported that 855 armed Kurds passed through the Suez Canal to arrive in Basra while the clashes between the Shammar tribe and leftists continued, although the Soviet press agency declared that most of the returning refugees were women, children, and old men ("Vatan", 12.04.1959, p. 5). Likewise, *Akşam* newspaper claimed that the Iraqi authorities were planning to relocate armed communist Kurds coming from the USSR to Kirkuk, which the Turkmans inhabited. The National Turkish Student Union (*Milli Türk Talebe Birliği*) protested the detention of 1700 Turkmen and alleged human rights abuses, saying that they would apply to the UN for a solution ("Akşam", 14.04.1959, p. 3). According to *Ulus*, Iraqi Turkman students protested the Qasim administration's legitimacy as he dragged Iraq toward communism ("Ulus", 8.04.1959, p. 1) and armed communist Kurds would take over Kirkuk and expel Turks from the city ("Ulus", 14.04.1959, p. 3). Avni Doğan began to publish another article series, titled "Danger Bells are Ringing Again," and aimed to inform the public opinion on the Kurdish issue in Iraq following the mutiny, stating that communism was no longer an ideology but an offensive instrument (Doğan, 1959, p. 1).

The peculiarity of the occurrences should be investigated. According to the CIA bulletin, the return of Kurdish refugees had been known since mid-March, which means it was not breaking news for the Turkish press (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA-RDP79T00975A004400040001-8., 18.03.1959, p. 1). There was no extensive coverage of the events in Kirkuk in the Turkish press before or after Asım Eren's interpellation.

There were some minor reports, but they didn't mention any Turkmen massacre during the al-Shawwaf mutiny in March or the Dabak rebellion the following month. Indeed, there is no evidence of a massacre against the Turkmen population until July. Yaşar Kaya sent their protest letter to various newspapers. *Vatan and Ulus* published Asım Eren's response to the protest on April 13. However, *Akşam* featured the protest in the most provocative way possible by saying, "Students claimed that they were Kurdists" in the headline on April 15 ("Akşam", 15.04.1959, p. 1). On the same day, the Istanbul 3rd Court issued an order over the publication ban on "all publications on the subject of Kurdism that appeared and would appear" was printed in *Akşam* ("Akşam", 16.04.1959, p. 1). Similarly, Avni Doğan's article series in *Vatan* was also terminated.

Meanwhile, the CIA stated in its report dated April 8 that the Kurds had no possibility of establishing a state and that they did not pose any threat to Türkiye (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010091-8, 08.04.1959, pp. 1-3). Türkiye's exaggerated and performative response, as well as the way the ban on Kurdish-related news was issued, strengthens the idea that there is an effort to frame the Kurdish students participating in the protest.[14]

A historian must consider that documents from the British Foreign Office and the CIA, like any state-produced document, reflect certain political biases; thus, their portrayal of Ankara's allegedly excessive reactions must be read cautiously. I share this idea as well. However, during the Cold War, Türkiye's NATO membership and role as a buffer zone against the USSR made it strategically important to these powers. Based on the assumption that these countries would prioritize Türkiye's interests over Kurdish rights in the long run, their acknowledgment of the Turkish state's disproportionate responses further reinforces the conclusions drawn above.

[14] It is worth noting that Eren later gave another interpellation on the worsening situation of Iraqi Turkmans on December 11, 6 days before the mass arrest of the 49ers (Varol Şener, 2019, p. 41).

2.2.2.2. *Kımıl* (Wheatbug) Incident and Second Telegram Protest

Musa Anter continued his opposition from his column in the *İleri Yurt*. He increased the use of Kurdish words in his writings. For instance, he wrote about his conversation with a beggar who does not speak Turkish. The beggar lost his young son during "the campaign,"[15] was subsequently abandoned by his wife and expressed his honest wish for death as soon as possible (Anter, 2010b, p. 41). Three days before the Wheatbug incident, he wrote a harsh criticism of President Bayar's Eastern Tour and his visit to Diyarbakır.[16] He stated that the animals sacrificed for Bayar's visit would rather want to be sacrificed for the dogs of Diyarbakır than for him. (Anter, 2010a, p. 31). His sarcastic and brutal style attracted attention but drew the authorities' wrath closer.

Although economic prosperity was achieved in Kurdistan with agricultural mechanization and state-funded loans to pro-DP aghas to a limited extent during the DP government, the quality of life in rural areas was frighteningly primordial. In the last years of the 1950s, more than 3000 patients developed porphyria after consuming wheat seedlings treated with a fungicide, mainly in Diyarbakır and surrounding Kurdish cities (Cripps et al., 1984, p. 413). The disease was mentally and physically torturous. Patients experienced weakness, difficulty with fine motor skills, and photosensitivity with blistering rash. Loss of appetite was also present. The skin's fragility caused mutilating scars due to bullae up to 5 cm in a black sore (*kara yara*). Hyperpigmentation and excessive hair growth caused children to be called monkey children (Peters vd., 1987, p. 184).

The outbreak was a result of horrible management and greedy profiteering. Poisonous wheat was distributed to pro-DP landlords as seeds. Hundreds of thousands of tons of wheat were sold by the landlords to the poor local people at a price cheaper than barley. This wheat was ground into flour, and then bread was baked. However, wheat, which was

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[15] Campaign is a possible reference to suppressing the Sheikh Sait Rebellion.
[16] The day he published the column coincides with the protest to Bayar in Ağrı organized by Naci Kutlay (Kutlay, 1998, p. 76)

supposed to be used against pests, soon showed disastrous side effects on people, mostly on children (Anter, 2010, p. 187). The death toll skyrocketed as a result. Cumhuriyet reported that no toddler survived in Bismil, and 700 children had died in two years so far ("Cumhuriyet", 23.07.1959, p. 1). Meanwhile, Musa Anter traveled to Kurdish villages around Diyarbakır as a journalist and wrote his observations in the "What an Advanced Homeland." The fungicide that caused black sores was popularly known as the wheat bug. Courts became Anter's stomping ground because of his Kurdish-sprinkled satires. Thinking it would at least be worth it, he published a poem in his column written in Kurdish, quoting a girl from Siverek complaining over the disease and poverty (Anter, 2010b, p. 141);

> I climbed the mountain, uncle, poor mountain felt blue
>
> Barley ears uncle and wheat turned to ash
>
> Wheatbug came, uncle; poor wheat is ash now
>
> They ate wheat and left the hay.
>
> It came from the highlands and ate our wheat (…)

Anter replied to the girl, "Don't worry, sister. Your brothers are about to come and save you from the wheat bug" (Anter, 2010b, p. 11).[17]

As expected, Musa Anter was sued immediately. According to Şerafettin Elçi, a 49er and famous politician from the 70s, Mehmet Ali Dinler met with Edip Altınakar, the newspaper's lawyer, before returning to Ankara. Altınakar suggested Dinler and other Kurdish students send telegrams expressing solidarity with *İleri Yurt* staff so the defense could leverage itself by showing widespread support behind the defendants. Compared to protesting a deputy, this protest seemed a bit milder but still troublesome. Kurdish students in Ankara gathered at Atatürk Forest Farm with the participation of Ziya Şerefhanoğlu. Twenty-five Kurdish students organized another telegram protest and

[17] In Kurmanc Kurdish, the word *kımıl* can respectively be used for wheat bugs and parasites, making it more degrading.

signed a statement supporting Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım, and Abdurrahman Dolak (Kaya, 2012, pp. 79-81).

The article was published on August 29, 1959, coincident with the exacerbated ethnic and political tension in Iraq. The tension started after al-Shawwaf's mutiny and flared up even more in the first anniversary celebrations of the revolution, which turned into a bloody massacre in Kirkuk. Two official parades were planned in Kirkuk to celebrate the revolution's first anniversary. The first parade was mainly Turkmen, while Mayor Maarouf Barzinji and communist officials organized the second parade. Tensions arose at the beginning over disagreements about the parade route, which eventually turned into a three-day massacre (Kayalan, 2018, p. 65).

An Iraqi brigade comprising Kurdish soldiers launched a mortar attack on residential areas inhabited by Turkmens on July 15th. By July 17th, 120 houses had been destroyed or looted before military units from Baghdad arrived to restore order (Anderson & Stansfield, 2009, p. 34). Batatu believed that the massacre marked the demise of the communists in Iraq, referring to its bloodiness, and he blamed the Kurdish extremists by pointing to the victims' ethnic background. Most casualties, with only three exceptions out of 31 reported deaths and six out of 130 injuries, were Turkmen. Additionally, almost all of those involved in the violence, except for four individuals out of 28 executed, were Kurds (Batatu, 1978, p. 912).

Onur Eci's master's thesis, "*Türkiye'de Kürtçülük Hareketi ve Kırk Dokuzlar Davası*," is an academic study that explores the 49ers' trial. Eci claims that Asım Eren's interpellation about retaliation in kind to the Turkmen massacre was made after July 14 (Eci, 2022, p. 50). However, the incidents that Eren referred to occurred in April 1959, following Mustafa Dabak's mutiny and the return of Kurdish immigrants from the USSR. The aforementioned news in *Ulus* can easily verify it.

Although Eci confuses dates and events, he is right about one specific thing: the Kirkuk Massacre was a milestone in the trial process. Indeed, Anter and *İleri Yurt* were more under the spotlight now. As will be mentioned below, the DP government increased surveillance efforts against the Kurds, and a smear campaign against the journal in Turkish mainstream media started. Anter's political and intellectual charisma and *Kımıl's*

anti-colonialist undertone would provide the government with a valuable tool to prove the existence of a so-called rising Kurdish-communist threat in Türkiye.

The government took action to prevent the massacre's effect on domestic politics first. President Celal Bayar and the DP cabinet issued a decree in September 1959, prohibiting the importation and distribution of any visual documents regarding the Kirkuk Massacre into the country (Turkish Republican Archive (BCA), KDB, 153/53-17., 02.09.1959, p. 1). They aimed to minimize the uproar caused by the graphic images seemingly. However, the decree was issued a month and a half after the massacre and four days after Anter's satire. Meanwhile, the Turkish officials received an intelligence note claiming that Barzani was wounded and ran away, and the Iraqi government initiated the cleansing of communists (BCA, ÖKM, 69/438-9., 30.08.1959, p. 1). This recalls the idea that the decree may be more about creating a repressive atmosphere in the media by tightening the existing ban on Kurdish-related news for the upcoming imprisonment and trial of the 49ers, which was about to start a few months later, than the actual massacre itself.

Anter had written political columns in which he used Kurdish words before *Kımıl*. *Kımıl* was no less harsh than them. However, *Kımıl* received particular attention in the Turkish press. Four days after the article, the *Yeni Sabah* newspaper wrote a detailed review. They were surprised that the term "savior brothers" was mentioned in a column written on a natural issue, and they felt the need to call the deputy governor of Diyarbakir to get more information about the incident in *İleri Yurt* ("Yeni Sabah", 4.09.1959, p. 4). Selami İzzet Sedes expressed his disappointment with state officials' lack of awareness of the newspaper and questioned who sold the paper to them. (Sedes, 1959, p. 3). Likewise, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper also complained about the state officials not taking necessary measures ("Cumhuriyet", 06.09.1959, p. 5).

There were also some positive comments in the media. A journalist from *Akşam* asserted that Kurdish is a language spoken in Türkiye; therefore, calling for an investigation is ridiculous, and language must be seen as a supra-political matter (Hekimoğlu, 1959, p. 3). Fikret Adil, the famous boheme author of the era, criticized the hypocrisy of allowing the English language while banning Kurdish (Adil, 1959, p. 4). *Ödemiş Cephe* (Ödemiş Front), a local Izmir newspaper, supported *İleri Yurt* staff. Anter called them in his

column “humanity and fraternity front” (Anter, 2010e, p. 27). Turgut Akın, a fellow 49er and Ankara law student from Diyarbakır, wrote a column in the *Forum* journal favoring *İleri Yurt* and Anter.[18] Appreciating Hekimoğlu in *Akşam*, he asserted that Kurdish people had no option but to listen to the Soviet and Iraqi radio channels since they did not understand Turkish-mandatory broadcasts; thus, the normalization of the Kurdish language in the public sphere is a necessity (Üzülmez, 2005, p. 182).

Anter started a tough fight against the criticism directed at him. Anter was accused of 17 crimes related to his journalistic activities and ongoing lawsuits, but he did not seem to be intimidated by legal procedures (“Kurdistan”, November 1959, p. 22). Anter gave harsh answers to the accusations made against *İleri Yurt*. He wrote about the ridiculousness of accusations over a parasite while actual parasites had exploited Türkiye for ten years, referring to the DP government (Anter, 2010e, p. 46). He advocated that minority rights determined in the Lausanne Treaty should be implemented for Kurds, just as the KSSE did (Anter, 2010f, p. 32).

In response to the assertion that Kurds are not a minority, he stated that he does not accept the notion of majority identity, which has fewer rights than minorities (Anter, 2010f, p. 24). Anter's denial and challenge of Turkish nationalist rhetoric were unprecedentedly radical in Turkish political history. A few months later, Musa Anter, some Kurdish intellectuals, Kurdish college students who participated in the petition protests, and a few unrelated people would be arrested, and the Trial of the 49ers would begin.

2.3. The Trial Process

2.3.1. Imprisonment and Accusations

The DP government took action in response to the growing global attention on the Kurdish matter after the Iraqi Revolution. On July 31, 1959, Istanbul National Police

[18] There was no accusation against him. He may have been included in the trial due to this article in Forum or to reach the expected number of fifty defendants set by the DP government.

Chief Inspector Ergun Gökdeniz presented a report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs outlining the plan to arrest the 49ers. The report also included a “Current Situation of the Kurdish Movement” appendix. Gökdeniz suggested that the detainees be portrayed as communists to gain public trust, with the belief that a propaganda campaign claiming “communists deceived Kurdish youth” would be successful. On the same day, Ziya Selışık, a high police chief official and the chief of the national police after the 1960 Coup, submitted another report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The report recommended that the arrests be kept secret and handled as a communist issue to avoid political backlash. Selışık also suggested that the situation could be used for foreign propaganda if the conditions were favorable (Yön, 25.09.1964, p. 4).

Kurdish DP deputy Abdülmelik Fırat spoke to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, about the 49ers when they were cellmates in Yassıada after the 1960 Coup. According to Zorlu, it was proposed to exterminate five thousand or two thousand five hundred people or put them in camps as a precaution at the meeting attended by Bayar, Menderes, Zorlu, Gedik, and Erdelhun. Zorlu rejected the offer and stated that it would cause an international scandal. Upon objection, they agreed that the national intelligence officials would detain and interrogate suspects instead of mass murdering them. (Fırat, 1996, p. 71-2). Then, President Bayar instructed the preparation of a report on Kurdish movements in Türkiye. The report included a “list of Kurds” who were involved in pro-Kurdish activities, including some DP deputies such as Kasım Küfrevi and Muslih Görentaş (Bardakçı, 2012, para. 5). Some of the people on the list are noteworthy. Among them, Esat Cemiloğlu, Ali Karahan, and Canip Yıldırım would later be arrested in the trial of the 49ers.

On December 17, 1959, Kurdish students and activists were arrested. Ten people were tried without arrest, while forty people were arrested, as there were forty prison cells in Harbiye (Kaynar, 2019, p. 587). Major Şevket Turan's wife informed DP deputy Abdülmelik Fırat about the seriousness of the situation. Fırat then contacted the notorious Minister of the Interior, Namık Gedik, to request more information. Gedik readily explained that they caught a dangerous secret organization made of officers, lawyers, and businessmen red-handed (Kaya, 2005, pp. 105-6).

In addition to Ankara and Istanbul, some 49ers in other cities were also quickly captured. Musa Anter was arrested in Diyarbakır and sent to Istanbul by plane (Anter, 2010, pp. 146-47). Nurettin Yılmaz was detained in his hotel room during a trip to Mardin with his father. Just like Anter, he was sent to Istanbul by plane from Diyarbakır, together with Mehmet Ali Dinler, who was also from Cizre, an Atatürk Forest Farm meeting attendee (Yılmaz, 2008, pp. 44-5). Yavuz Çamlıbel was detained while serving in the military unit in Kars as a reserve officer (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 9). Naci Kutlay was working as a doctor in Ankara Çamlıdere at the time of his arrest (Kutlay, 1998, p. 78). Ali Karahan and Şevket Turan were neighbors living in the same apartment in Ankara, along with Sait Ramanlı, whose son, Mustafa Ramanlı, was also a 49er. They were both arrested after a police raid on their homes. The searches conducted by intelligence officials were exceptionally thorough. They meticulously tore apart quilts and bedding in their quest. The police who arrived at Karahan's house went so far as to remove the mirrors. One of the MAH agents firmly told Lebibe Karahan that he would resign unless he found a piece of evidence. While Ali Karahan was taken to Istanbul, intelligence officials deliberately withheld this crucial information from his family (D. Karahan Mengü, personal communication, 18.02.2024).

DP officials opted not to arrest the PRP member 49ers to prevent exacerbating the chaotic period and provoking further opposition anger. Therefore, not all arrests co-occurred. For instance, Yıldırım became a member of the PRP before the arrests following the alliance with the LP. After the 1960 Coup, Yıldırım received a strange letter from a young man from Dersim named Hüseyin Sarıtaş, who fled to Munich after the arrest of the 49ers. Even though Yıldırım brought this letter to the police, saying that this was a mere counterintelligence attempt to frame him, he was arrested because of the letter and incarcerated in the Istanbul Military Academy (Miroğlu, 2010, pp. 137-39). Interestingly, although all political prisoners were released after the 1960 Coup, the detention of the 49ers continued (Göktaş, 1991, p. 69). Years later, Kutlay met a staff colonel who worked for the junta committee. The colonel stated that the 49ers could only be released after the 14ers, a hardline nationalist group among the junta led by Alparslan Türkeş, had been exiled (Kutlay, 1998, p. 80).

Some of the detainees were neither students nor activists. For example, Muhsin Şavata was a Kurdish livestock dealer from Malatya. He spent his life working in various Kurdish provinces for business. In October 1958, he sent a letter to Menderes and Bayar, expressing his concern that the Kurds living in the East could not understand daily news. He requested the establishment of a Kurdish radio broadcast to strengthen the bond between the state and the Kurdish people (Arslan, 2020, pp. 77-9). Despite embracing his Kurdish identity, he had no connection with the other 49ers. Ökkeş Karadağ was a Kurdish Alevi worker from Maraş and was detained for sending a letter to Abdurrahman Dolak, the owner of the *İleri Yurt* newspaper, although he had never been involved in any political activity whatsoever (Anter, 2010, p. 169). Ironically, many detainees suspected that Karadağ was an agent (Kutlay, 1998, p. 87).

The state officials concealed the detainees' whereabouts for a while. The families of the 49ers attempted to contact the prisoners through personal connections. Deputy Fırat met with Prime Minister Menderes at the request of Şevket Turan's wife. Fırat was also related to Şahabettin Septioğlu and Feyzullah Demirtaş, two of the 49ers from Ankara, which heightened his concern for their well-being. Unfortunately, Fırat was unable to obtain any information regarding the situation (Fırat, 1996, pp. 66-7). Eventually, the 49ers' relatives found ways to locate their whereabouts. For example, an MAH official who was present at the raid in Karahan's home told his wife that Karahan was taken to Istanbul along with the other 49ers (D. Karahan Mengü, personal communication, 18.02.2024). Azime Kutlay, Naci Kutlay's wife, was a teacher. She asked a colleague whose husband was a police officer about him. The colleague informed Azime that Naci had been sent to a prison in Istanbul (Kutlay, 1998, p. 81-2).

The charges were "involving separatist activities with the help of a foreign state" and "destroying national feelings through racial sentiments." According to the military court, a group of Turks who identified themselves as Kurds had pursued separatist aims within the country through the Sheikh Said, Ağrı, and Dersim rebellions, and the Soviet Union wanted to take advantage of this chaotic situation. Kurdism in Türkiye resulted from internationalist communist encouragement since KSSE's congresses report, Iraqi communist support to the KSEE, and KSSE's ties with the Soviet-funded IUS were hints

of the inclination to such ideology. In addition, there were recent Kurdish radio broadcasts from Yerevan and Cairo promoting separatist sentiments. Even the European and American press bodies, such as Newsweek and Proves, participated in the pro-Kurdish propaganda (Kutlay, 1994, pp. 13-4). Despite the lack of concrete evidence linking the accusations and the accused, the requested penalty was the death sentence.

According to the court, pro-Kurdish activities were concentrated in and controlled from Istanbul, Ankara, and Diyarbakır, respectively, by Ziya Şerefhanoğlu, Şevket Turan, and Musa Anter, along with Abdurrahman Dolak. These people had formed an organization called the Kurdish Independence Party and were carrying out separatist activities. The events organized in different parts of Ankara and Istanbul were a facade covering up illegal activities. Picnics with drums and zurna were indeed a camouflage for secret meetings. Şerefhanoğlu had also announced the party statute and founded the organization at one of these events (Vedat, 1980, p. 229). The meetings held by the organization were essential for its development. For instance, the picnic at Kayaş in 1958 is considered one of the party's founding events. During a meeting at Atatürk Forest Farm in September 1959, the proposal to support *İleri Yurt* through a subscription was assessed as part of organized separatist activities.

One of the participants in the event at the Atatürk Farm was Mehmet Özer. He was a medical student from Siverek and Remzi Bucak's assistant. Özer, who stated in his memoirs that intelligence officers beat him for attending the meeting, said that he went for the student festival, but there were no drums and zurna, and that the people who came asked each other which city and tribe they were from, and that he found it weird (Özer, 2010, p. 157). Ali Karahan's daughter, Dilvin Karahan Mengü, says that events such as the picnic at the Atatürk Forest Farm were organized to enable Kurdish youth in Ankara to get to know each other, and that she attended many of those events as a kid with her father (D. Karahan Mengü, personal communication, 18.02.2024). The 49ers and those associated with them were not revolutionary vanguards who initiated the Kurdish national struggle; rather, they formed a broad network of friends who embraced the Kurdish identity.

The evidence presented in the case concerning separatist activities was varied. For instance, a bank account was opened in the name of Captain Mehmet Bilgin at Ziraat Bank. Şevket Turan sent letters requesting everyone to donate as much money as possible. Individuals such as Abdülmelik Fırat were also asked for assistance. The court asserted that this bank account was established to fund the struggle for an independent Kurdistan. However, Turan and Bilgin maintained in their statements that the account was a donation fund created in response to the death of a Kurdish student who had died in poverty (Kutlay, 1994, p. 189). Moreover, audio recordings of private conversations recorded at Şevket Turan's house by the intelligence service, attending meetings and sending protest petitions, as well as an issue of News Week containing an article on the Kurds, a photo of Barzani signed "to my nephew with love", possessing KSSE magazines, and attending an event at the Iraqi Consulate were included in the court files as evidence of separatist organization membership, along with many unrelated incidents. Nevertheless, poems could be the most mentioned evidence in court minutes as Temel mockingly calls the allegations "the trial of poems" (Temel, 2015, p. 91). Primarily written in quite amateur styles and criticizing the severe conditions the Kurds faced, they embodied the anticolonial zeitgeist of the 1950s. The poems written by Naci Kutlay to the famous Algerian guerrilla Djamilah Bouheired and the African people were considered by the judicial authority to be "provoking Kurdish national feeling." Overall, twelve 49ers were indicted for the poems they wrote or possessed.

Prison conditions were deplorable. Prisoners were held in isolation wards in Harbiye. Rats crawled around the cells, and sewage flowed freely. They were deprived of basic human rights, including hygiene. In addition to visitor bans, inmates face strict isolation from one another, leading them to develop creative ways to communicate. They use Morse code, a clever method that allows them to share thoughts and messages despite the isolation (Kutlay, 1998, p. 81). While they were not physically tortured, intimidation and threats were present during the interrogation. The food was served on metal plates typically used by soldiers. Speaking to the soldiers was prohibited, except for a few words when requesting permission to use the bathroom. Bathrooms were available only once a week, and only a limited amount of water was brought in from outside (S. Çelik, 2016, p. 36). The prisoners' health conditions were deteriorating progressively. Şevket Turan, who

had diabetes, was hospitalized in a coma. Sait Elçi was suffering from tuberculosis, while Yaşar Kaya was diagnosed with paratyphoid, an illness that arises from consuming food or water tainted with feces (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 98). Mehmet Emin Batu, a law student at Ankara University from Mardin, lost his life due to gastrointestinal bleeding caused by the harsh conditions in prison. Following his death, the number of those tried decreased to 49. Therefore, the inmates were renamed the 49ers (Gümgüm, 2022, p. 185).

Aside from a few individuals like Anter and Akkoyunlu, none of the inmates had prior experience with prison life. The poor conditions contributed to an increase in the prisoners' political awareness. Maintaining disciplinary segregation by the prison administration, even after the end of interrogations, fostered an environment that fueled radicalization. Following Batu's death, the inmates decided to take action. They agreed to initiate a rebellion by communicating through Morse code (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 98). Meanwhile, Nurettin Yılmaz reached out to a Kurdish guard named Ali. Yılmaz informed Ali about their plans to start a rebellion and requested his assistance. Ali subsequently informed the other Kurdish guards and advised them not to interfere with the rebels (Yılmaz, 2008, 53-4).

Those who managed to free themselves from their cells opened the doors for the other inmates, allowing the prisoners to fill the yard. After some prisoners hugged each other, caught up, and exchanged stories, they observed a moment of silence in front of Batu's cell. Anter and Şerefhanoğlu then gave a speech commemorating Batu (Yılmaz, 2008, p. 54).

Faik Savaş claimed that he fought back against a soldier who tried to force him to eat a rat in the bathroom. He stated that the rebellion began after beating the soldier and yelling at his friends, "I killed a Turkish soldier. They will kill us all. Resist and die with your honor." (Zuexpayij Kaya, 2018, para. 32) However, since no other 49er mentioned such an incident in any memoirs, it is vital to approach his account skeptically.

The only prisoner who chose not to participate in the rebellion was Ali Karahan. When explaining his decision, Karahan said, "They were all young, and it would have felt strange for me to participate in a rebellion as an older man being among them." However,

his attitude ultimately distanced him from the other prisoners over time (D. Karahan Mengü, personal communication, 18.02.2024).

Medet Serhat, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, and Yaşar Kaya confiscated warden Major Razi Kasırga's gun during the rebellion. Although inmates returned the gun as Anter suggested, the rebellion continued. Due to the unresolved situation, Major General Kemal Binatlı arranged a meeting with the prisoners' representatives, Anter and Turan (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 79). Anter rejected the conditions proposed by Binatlı. In retaliation, soldiers put Anter into a ward where there was also a sewage pond (Anter, 2010b, pp. 153-54). Binatlı then met with Turan and agreed to return the prisoners to their wards, provided the inmates' conditions improved. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a deception; the conditions for the prisoners worsened instead of improving (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 97).

In April 1960, the situation began to change for the 49ers. Political upheaval was growing throughout the country, with the government facing more pressing issues than just the Kurds, such as the rising youth movement at universities. This turmoil provided some relief for the 49ers. By May, the 49ers were allowed to share the courtyard and have visitors for the first time (Anter, 2010b, p. 156).

On May 27, 1960, a group of low-ranking soldiers in the army staged a coup against the ruling DP. Members of the ruling party were arrested immediately, including President Bayar and Prime Minister Menderes, who were taken to Yassıada to face charges of various crimes, including treason. As mentioned before, the 49ers remained incarcerated despite the release of all other political prisoners.

The coup resulted in several changes for the 49ers. The prisoners were removed from their cells in Harbiye and relocated to a large ward accommodating all 49ers which was the beginning of a communal life for the 49ers; however, the conditions remained poor, although it was much better than the cells they stayed in. For example, Lebibe Karahan and her daughter, Dilvin, visited Ali Karahan while he was imprisoned in Harbiye. Unfortunately, her younger brother was deeply affected during his first visit to the prison and could not bring himself to return. Eventually, Lebibe Karahan sought assistance from junta leader Alparslan Türkeş to improve the conditions for prisoners, such as allowing

them to take showers; however, she did not receive any response (D. Karahan Mengü, personal communication, 18.02.2024).

The relocation of the 49ers to the wards sparked another confrontation. Tension arose between the prisoners, led by Anter and Cemiloğlu, who were reluctant to move to these wards and wanted to spend more time outside in the sun after being confined for months and the soldiers. While they were not allowed to transfer to wards with better conditions, they did gain the right to go outside in the fresh air more frequently and to walk and play sports (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 103).

Although inmates expected the 1960 coup to impact their conditions positively, more people were arrested. The detention of Canip Yıldırım had a damaging impact on Kurdish public opinion. At a time when political prisoners were being released, the arrest of a PRP member and a popular intellectual from Diyarbakır shattered the Kurds' belief that the 1960 coup would yield positive results (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 139). Furthermore, the news that the prisoners were being relocated to the Soğukkuyu Military Prison in Ankara while awaiting release shocked many (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 101). The prisoners found out that sentences, including a request for the death penalty, were being sought for them in Ankara. They were deeply troubled by the fact that the Kurds had been denied the so-called liberal atmosphere that existed after 1960 (Kutlay, 1998, p. 92). They believed that the discrimination they faced was a result of their Kurdish identity, which contributed to their political radicalization.

Canip Yıldırım's arrest finalized the list of those prosecuted in the case. Those facing charges of separatism and espionage, as listed in the case file, included: Şevket Turan, Naci Kutlay, Ali Karahan, Koço Elbistan, Yavuz Çamlıbel, Mehmet Ali Dinler, Yusuf Kaçar, Nurettin Yılmaz, Ziya Şerefhanoğlu, Medet Serhat, Hasan Akkuş, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Selim Kılıçoğlu, Şahabettin Septioğlu, Sait Elçi, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Yaşar Kaya, Faik Savaş, Haydar Aksu, Ziya Acar, Fadık Budak, Halil Demirel, Esat Cemiloğlu, Ferit Bilen, Mustafa Nuri Direkçigil, Fevzi Avşar, Necati Siyahkan, Hasan Ulus, Nazmi Balkaş, Hüseyin Oğuz Üçok, Mehmet Nazım Çiğdem, Fevzi Kartal, Mehmet Aydemir, Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım, Emin Kotan, Ökkeş Karadağ, and Muhsin Şavata. Those accused of attempting to undermine national sentiments

through racial discrimination were Turgut Akın, Sıtkı Elbistan, Şerafettin Elçi, Mustafa Ramanlı, Mehmet Özer, Feyzullah Demirtaş, Cezmi Balkaş, Halis Yokuş, İsmet Balkaş, Sait Bingöl, and – due to their association with the case – Mehmet Bilgin and Fethullah Kakioğlu. Hüseyin Emin Batu passed away while in prison.

The legal proceedings started after their transfer to Soğukkuyu Military Prison in Ankara in 1960. As previously mentioned, the allegations were substantiated by various forms of evidence, including poems, petitions, and social gatherings. In the initial trial, a few arrestees, like Esat Cemiloğlu, were granted release. Yet, he rejected being released as "he cannot leave the cell while young kids like Yaşar Kaya and Oğuz Üçok were still in prison" (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 108). Gradually, all prisoners were released; for instance, Yaşar Kaya, the initiator of the petition protest, was released approximately one to two weeks after Cemiloğlu. Nonetheless, the trial process extended over a decade, culminating in the sentencing of several individuals, among them Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Yavuz Çamlıbel, and Yaşar Kaya, to imprisonment. Those who received sentences were not rearrested, considering the duration they had already spent in custody; instead, they were subjected to exile under "general surveillance punishment" (Pêşeng, 2015, pp. 109-10).

2.3.2. The Trial in the Media

As mentioned, the arrests occurred on December 17, 1959, about a week after Asım Eren submitted a new interpellation regarding Kirkuk Turkmens. However, no news about arrests is reported in the Turkish press. The first reason was that, on a turbulent day in Turkish politics in 1958, American journalist Eugene Pulliam wrote an article criticizing the DP and its leader, Menderes. *Vatan* and *Akis*, among other newspapers and magazines, published this article. A lengthy trial process followed, and on December 16, 1959, *Vatan* was closed for a month, and its owner, Ahmet Emin Yalman, and editor-in-chief Selami Akpınar were sentenced to prison (Gök, 2003, p. 112). This event, known as the Pulliam Incident, caused controversy due to Yalman's international reputation as a respected journalist. The International Press Institute even organized a protest in Switzerland to draw attention to the incident ("Manchester Guardian", 19.12.1959, p. 4). The British Foreign Office officials stated that Türkiye deemed the arrests a domestic matter.

However, they believed that as an ally of Türkiye, Britain should warn Turkish officials about the troublesome aspect of the issue (TNA, FO371/144790., 21.12.1959, p. 2). The 30 49'er were arrested a day after this incident, which was overlooked since Yalman's arrest caused a shocking effect on the Turkish press.

Another reason why the arrest of the 49ers was not widely reported was the ban on news about Kurdism-related topics promulgated in April 1959, as mentioned above. This ban was the primary reason for the lack of information in Turkish media about the arrests. Nevertheless, detailed information about the arrests can be found in the CIA archive:

> “Thirty "key members" of a Kurdish underground organization in Türkiye were arrested on 17 December. The action was ordered by Premier Menderes following four years of monitoring Kurdish activities by the security and police services.
>
> Two of the Kurds were arrested in Diyarbakir, a Kurdish center in eastern Türkiye, while the rest were detained in Istanbul and Ankara. Many were reported to be young university students. All 30, after being placed in jails in Istanbul by 20 December, will be tried for "engaging in activities dangerous to the security of the nation." A search of their homes revealed at least one document indicating a link with Iranian Communists, and one of the Kurds arrested is described by the Turkish official as a known Communist sympathizer.
>
> The Turkish Government has imposed a press ban on all information related to the arrests beyond the fact that such action has been taken. Representatives of the press were informed, however, that the arrests involved a secret political organization "with foreign connections." With this treatment, the limited Kurdish organization could serve as a pretext for a general tightening of controls on domestic political opposition (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA- RDP79T00975A004800430001-1., 21.12.1959, p. 1).”

The daily intelligence bulletin presented to senior US officials, including the US president, contains vital information about the arrest of the 49ers. It reveals that Kurdish students and intellectuals had been monitored for four years, which coincided with the KSSE’s establishment in Wiesbaden. The DP government most likely shared with the

American officials the opinion that the 49ers were directly linked to KSSE. Another issue explained in the bulletin is the lack of news about the 49's Trial in the press. The CIA reports that the Turkish press was fully aware of the arrests but chose to comply with the government's prohibitive policies. The press in opposition's criticism of Menderes after Yalman's and other's arrests, while not showing the same reflex on the arrested Kurds, highlighted the strength and scope of the anti-Kurdish establishment.

A piece of news about the arrest of 49 was published in the Times. The 5-line news did not contain any information about who the arrested people were: "Military authorities have arrested 30 persons charged with offenses against national security. An announcement today said they were accused of acting under incitement and with the aid of a foreign organization ("The Times", 19.12.1959, p. 4)." According to *Kurdistan*, the AFP and *Le Monde* made news concerning the arrest of Kurdish activists. AFP reported that Kurdish detainees were accused of having had contact with Iraqi Kurds, and *Le Monde* emphasized the silence in the Turkish media as the detainees aimed to get their cultural rights in a country where the literary use of the Kurdish language was officially prohibited ("Kurdistan", July 1960, p. 17).

Unsurprisingly, the most comprehensive news about the arrests appeared in KSSE's media organ, *Kurdistan*. In the issue published shortly after the 1960 Coup, they expressed the discomfort felt by the mainstream Kemalist fallacies repeated by the junta. For them, Cemal Gürsel's statements rejecting Kurdish existence were a mere continuation of Kemalist assimilationist policies. The names and professions of several 49ers were also listed in the magazine. *Kurdistan*'s editorial board also published a letter written by the "Executive Committee of the Kurdish Students' Society in Türkiye" dated June 11, 1960. The letter claimed that although Gürsel was a Kurd from Erzincan, he was no different from İnönü, another Kurd in denial of his identity, in advocating the assimilation of the Kurds. Moreover, while all political prisoners were released after the coup, they criticized the ongoing imprisonment of Kurdish prisoners. They stated that Kurdish prisoners were tortured and that their right to visit was restricted ("Kurdistan", July 1960, pp. 4-5).

News about the 49ers in the Turkish press emerged in conjunction with the trials in Ankara. Prior to this, there was not a single report during the arrests; however, on January 4, 1961, newspapers such as *Akşam, Dünya, Hürriyet, Tercüman, Ulus, Vatan,* and *Yeni Sabah* covered the case. For instance, in its issue dated January 4, 1961, *Akşam* ran the headline "Those who want to establish a Kurdish state are on trial." The article noted that most defendants were well-educated young people and were being tried in the Ankara Military Court ("Akşam" 04.01.1961, p. 1). Similarly, although *Dünya* did not feature the news on its front page, it reported that 49 individuals were on trial at the court in the Ankara garrison, most of whom were students from eastern provinces like Urfa and Diyarbakır ("Dünya", 04.01.1961, p. 5). All articles published in seven different newspapers were covered on the first page, no detailed information about the defendants or the trials was provided, and shared only the names of those imprisoned. No further news regarding the trials appeared thereafter.

2.3.3. Arrestees and Discussions – Personalities, Ideologies, Future Paths

Hamit Bozarslan explores whether the 49ers exemplify sociological samples and how well they reflect a broader Kurdish movement. He makes several key observations. First, he notes that 33 defendants were born between 1930 and 1938, while the others were born between 1897 and 1928. Thus, he suggests that this age distribution indicates an intergenerational awareness of the issue among the Kurdish people. Second, he emphasizes that a notable number of the detainees had college degrees: 19 had studied or earned degrees in law, 11 in medicine, 7 in engineering, and 3 in economics. This indicates that the detainees had a relatively high educational level. Finally, he investigates the inmates' backgrounds and states that not all arrestees came from notable tribal families. Twenty-two of them hailed from middle or lower-class backgrounds. In this context, the detainees can be viewed as representatives of the "newly educated" class that gradually emerged under the Kemalist regime (Bozarslan, 2013, pp. 131-32).

Building on Bozarslan's points, we can categorize the 49ers into two contrasting clusters. The first cluster focuses on ideological alignments, while the second centers on age groups. This section will focus on the political debates held in prison that led to the

ideological split and the arguments presented by the detainees. Second, it will examine the detainees as older conservatives vs older leftists. Next, these categories will be applied to younger prisoners, enabling an analysis of their ideological trajectories in their later life. By examining the prisoners' political careers after their release, we can understand how their time and discussions in prison influenced their ideological development.

Ruşen Aslan says that the roots of the ideological division in the Kurdish movement can be traced back to the activities of the 49ers in prison, particularly their intellectual debates. After moving from solitary confinement to shared wards, the prisoners found a platform to discuss contemporary and theoretical issues. Over time, different intellectual factions began to emerge from these discussions. Ziya Acar, a left-wing 49er who participated in the debates, states, “The distinction between left and right was not sharply defined. The discussions maintained a mild tone and were not offensive. Most participants leaned left, including Musa Anter and Canip Yıldırım. Some identified as conservative Kurdish patriots, like Ziya Şerefanoğlu and Ali Karahan” (S. Çelik, 2016, para 42).

Individual 49ers' political beliefs were influenced mainly by their social class backgrounds. Kutlay noted that one group was primarily made up of individuals from poorer families, such as Kırmızıtoprak and Kaçar, who were more receptive to progressive ideas. In contrast, the other group came from more feudal notable families and thus supported the noble-led status quo in Kurdistan. This class background would later be reflected in their post-prison ideological tendencies. Bozarslan notes that many 49ers identify as socialists and represent a mix of three to four generations (Bozarslan, 2012, p. 3).

Nevertheless, remnants of the Kurdish “ancient regime” were still present and strong. Several years before the emergence of ideological divisions in the prison, a report from the British Foreign Office regarding the Kurds provided an overview of the youth incarcerated there and their beliefs. While the report focuses on Iraqi Kurds, it effectively encapsulates the essence of the political factions among Kurdish people in Türkiye at the dawn of the movement’s emergence:

> “A strong nationalist feeling amongst the intellectuals and amongst town-dwellers within and without the Kurdish provinces undoubtedly exists and is stimulated by

> communist propaganda but, though the same sentimental attachment to Kurdish nationalism is found amongst the tribal leaders their main concern has been with the age-old privileges which freedom from all forms of governmental control has given them (TNA, FO371/126889., 31.08.1957)."

The existing information on ideological groups and discussions among prisoners is quite scarce. Benefitting from limited materials, especially the memoirs of Anter, Yıldırım, Kutlay, Çamlıbel, and Kaya, efforts will be directed toward forming a central theme based on the brief ideas given.

Ziya Şerefhanoğlu served as the leader of the right-wing faction. Çamlıbel describes him as "an incorrigible anti-communist who couldn't even tolerate the word 'left'" (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 175). His ideological influence significantly shaped the perspectives of right-leaning young prisoners. Anter said that Şerefhanoğlu intimidated them by claiming that they were arrested for being Kurdish nationalists; therefore, if they were labeled as communists, they would be executed" (Anter, 2010, p. 160). Sait Elçi was the most prominent young 49er in his faction, who displayed strong intellectual and emotional loyalty to Şerefhanoğlu (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 188). Among the more extreme members of the right-wing faction was Şahabettin Septioğlu, known for his provocative acts, including calling the morning prayer in reaction to discussions held by the left-wing group (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 277).

On the left, Canip Yıldırım, an expert in theoretical Marxism, played a crucial role in shaping the ideological split within the prison (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 196). Örfi Akkoyunlu's stories of Nazım Hikmet resonated significantly with the young detainees (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 143). A Şerefhanoğlu's prominent opponent, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, held leftist views. Yıldırım characterized Kırmızıtoprak as the "antithesis of the old Kurdish mentality," as Kırmızıtoprak criticized Ali Karahan, Şevket Turan, and Şerefhanoğlu for their outdated ideas and inability to mobilize the masses. He also chastised Sait Elçi heavily for siding with Şerefhanoğlu (Miroğlu, 2010, pp. 148-49).

The rift between factions intensified and led to conflicts over time. For instance, Yaşar Kaya recounts that Şerefhanoğlu and Anter eventually stopped talking to each other after Şerefhanoğlu asked jail executives to bring *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Land) magazine to their

cells. The younger prisoners proposed to form a court to solve the tension. Anter accepted, but Şerefhanoğlu refused. That severed Şerefhanoğlu's ties with many younger prisoners irreparably (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 112).

Gradually, the traditional role of the "big brother," which aligned with the older generation's feudal Kurdish mindset, began to wane while the younger prisoners became increasingly aware of politics (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 147). The more they live together, the more they see differences between the generations. Many events and incidents accelerated to process. For example, after being transferred to mutual cells, they formed a shared resource pool based on communal economics and started buying books for themselves. The left-wing inmates mainly participated in reading sessions, while the right-wing inmates resisted their efforts. After the 1960 coup, obtaining leftist literature became easier for prisoners. They bought Maxim Gorky's compilation and history books published by the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography (Miroğlu, 2010, pp. 141-42).

Another tension among prisoners erupted because of the 1960 census. Citizens were asked about their native tongues in this census. Örfi Akkoyunlu, struggling with poor health and aging, began to experience mental challenges. He frequently clashed verbally with younger prisoners and resorted to profanities (Anter, 2010, p. 160). When Akkoyunlu declined to identify Kurdish as his native language, Faik Savaş physically attacked him (Kutlay, 1998, p. 88). Initially, the 55ers Incident caused many young prisoners to shift toward right-wing beliefs.[19] However, despite the unfortunate incidents involving Akkoyunlu, the integrity of the leftist older prisoners and the dynamics of discussions held in prison conditions ultimately led many right-wing youths to adopt leftist ideologies (Kutlay, 1998, p. 85).

As part of the ideological discussions mentioned above, the 49ers formed debate groups in prison. The prisoners prepared arguments on predetermined topics and defended them

[19] The "55ers Incident," also known as the Sivas Camp Incident, was the detention of 485 Kurdish tribal leaders and major landowners after the 1960 coup. The National Unity Committee ordered the exile of 55 of them to Sivas (Gunes, 2013, p. 53)

against one another. Each group also had a spokesperson. Kutlay told in the interview I conducted that Medet Serhat, and Sait Kırmızıtoprak primarily led the debate groups. Kızıltoprak was unsurprisingly the speaker for the left-leaning group, while Serhat was the head of the conservative group, which aligned perfectly with his family background. Since there was no clear distinction between right and left ideologies among young inmates, these debates mainly reflected an ongoing ideological exploration. The discussions centered on realpolitik topics such as Türkiye's social and economic transformation, U.S. policies, and their impacts on the Kurdish issue, rather than theoretical issues like colonialism or socialism in the third world. Also, the intellectual disagreement between Şerefhanoğlu and Anter influenced the debates and brought diverse perspectives for the prisoners. Key debate questions included: "Which should be prioritized in Türkiye: education or infrastructure?" "Industry or agriculture?" "Left or right?" and "What is the significance of nationalism?" Although elderly prisoners did not participate in the debates directly, they served as judges to ensure that discussions concluded impartially. Debates always ended in a draw to maintain a respectful atmosphere and to prevent tensions (N. Kutlay, personal communication, 17.03.2024).

The conclusion of this discussion can effectively be illustrated through two examples that illuminate the relationship between prison conditions and internal ideological discourses contributing to radicalization, as highlighted by Baki Duman: the defenses presented by Sait Kırmızıtoprak and Yusuf Kaçar during the 49ers Trial. Both defendants, associated with the 49ers group from Dersim, articulated their extremist perspectives distinctly through their testimonies. In his defense, Kırmızıtoprak asserted that "landlords and sheiks exploit the populace, and slavery is untenable in contemporary society." He further contended that "unlawful practices and behaviors that infringe upon human rights and freedoms are destined to be eradicated" (Duman, 2021a, para. 42). Kırmızıtoprak's statement clearly encapsulates his commitment to social justice and opposition to the feudal structure in Kurdistan. Yusuf Kaçar, when interrogated regarding his opposition to deposed President Celal Bayar, conveyed his position with greater intensity than Kırmızıtoprak. He asserted that Bayar's command to "leave no one alive in Dersim" justified the necessity for his prosecution at Yassıada. Moreover, Kaçar claimed that, as someone from Dersim who bore witness to the massacre, he had the right to oppose Bayar

and reject the official historical narrative propagated by the Turkish state (Duman, 2021b, para. 41). Kaçar's response underscores the profound influence of the Dersim Massacre on his consciousness, reflecting the weight of personal trauma.

Since the ideological debates and their respective sides were addressed, it is time to analyze the elder 49ers' political positions after their release and, subsequently, the younger 49ers' views and activities. Örfi Akkoyunlu was a self-achieved upper-middle-class Kurdish leftist artisan living in Eminönü. Originally from Malatya, he was not from an influential feudal family, contrary to other middle-aged 49ers. He was a member of the short-lived Turkish Socialist Party founded by Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu in the 1940s and was persecuted because of his political activities (Karaca, 2008, p. 312). He was a well-known left-wing personality among political milieus. Therefore, his participation in the 49ers case conveniently supports the government's claim of a Kurdish-communist threat. After his time in prison, he continued to engage in the socialist movement and raised TLP's appeal among the Kurds (Alış, 2012, p. 77). Although the harsh conditions in prison deteriorated his mental state while dealing with health issues, which led to even bloody conflicts with young 49ers, he later supported the DDKO formed by young Kurdish activists in the TLP, some of whom were his 49er cellmates (Kotan, 2003, p. 247).

Musa Anter was born in 1920 in the village of Zivinga, Mardin. He was a Kurdish journalist, writer, and activist who played a massive role in the Kurdish political struggle in Türkiye throughout his life. He was "the bridge between the second constitutional Kurdish intellectuals era and the post-1960 Kurdish intellectuals" (Kaya, 1993, p. 14). He was from a relatively poor but noble family. Anter was a key figure in shaping Kurdish identity and cultural politics. He used his journalism and activism to push for the recognition of Kurdish rights and language, challenging the state's policies of assimilation.

Interestingly, while "female firsts", such as the first female deputy or first female cabinet member, are widely mentioned in Türkiye, the first female *muhtar* is acknowledged rarely. This individual is Anter's mother, who served in this role for an extended period (Muğlu, 2020, p. 46). The racism he faced in high school in Adana led to his radicalization

at an early age. Although he moved to Istanbul to pursue a law degree, he ultimately dropped out and married Hale Hanım, a Kurdish noblewoman from the Zapsu family of Başkale, Van (E. B. Ekinci, 2023, pp. 529-30). He worked as a manager at Tigris Dorm and was one of its most engaged members. In addition to his trade involvement, such as owning a buffet in Sultanahmet, he remained active in journalism and published the Tigris Spring newspaper. His fondness for hosting Kurdish youth and intellectuals at his mansion in Suadiye led intelligence reports to label it the "Kurdish consulate" (Tüleylioğlu, 2018, p. 381)

After his release from prison in 1961, he continued his political activities with unwavering determination. He began writing articles on the Kurdish issue for Ahmet Hamdi Başar's magazine, *Barış Dünyası* (World of Peace). Simultaneously, he took a leading role in the publication of *Deng* newspaper. These actions led to his re-arrest during the Trial of the 23ers. Upon his release, he resumed his political career within the TLP, where he supported party activities even though he was not an official member. However, over time, disagreements arose, and he parted ways with the party. He later ran as an independent parliamentary candidate from Mardin. Anter garnered 10,000 votes, marking the highest total across the fifteen provinces of Mardin, but still could not hold the seat (Alış, 2009, p. 129)

One of the key moments in Anter's political career was his involvement in establishing the DDKO in 1969. The DDKO was one of the first Kurdish organizations in Türkiye to promote Kurdish culture and raise awareness of the social and political issues affecting Kurds, which will be explained in detail below. Anter and other Kurdish intellectuals helped shape the DDKO's goals of advocating for Kurdish rights within a broader framework of revolutionary change in Türkiye. In this sense, Fikret Bila says, Anter was the geist of the DDKO (Bilâ, 2004, p. 19). In addition to his effort to establish the DDKO, he also contributed to Dr. Şivan's KDPinT (Kurdistan Democratic Party in Türkiye). According to Arık, he was present at the meeting held in Ankara to form the party in June 1970 along with Dr. Şivan, Faik Savaş, Ziya Acar, and Nazmi Balkaş, some young 49ers (Arik, 2011, p. 117). However, he did not fully participate in the party as much as he did for the DDKO but remained a mentor. He was arrested in the 1971 Military Memorandum

in the DDKO trial and spent some time in prison. Once released, he went back to his village but was rearrested in the 1980 military coup. He moved back to İstanbul in the late 1980s and continued to write for newspapers and journals that emphasized the Kurdish issue, including *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda) and *Özgür Ülke* (Free Country). He became one of the founders of the People's Labor Party, Türkiye's first pro-Kurdish legal party, in 1990 (Y. Kaya, 2006, p. 238). Anter stayed dedicated to the Kurdish cause until his assassination on September 20, 1992. His life and activism illustrate the fight for Kurds in Türkiye amidst political chaos. He established a legacy as a journalist, organizer, and the banner bearer of the Kurdish movement after decades of suppression.

Canip Yıldırım was a Kurdish intellectual and lawyer who co-led *İleri Yurt* with his lifelong friend Musa Anter. Born in 1925 in Diyarbakır to a notable family from Lice, his father was a civil servant and PRP member. He identified himself as an assimilated Kurd as he couldn't speak Kurdish (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 93). After studying law in Ankara, Yıldırım pursued further education in Montpellier, France. There, he adopted Marxist ideology. Instead of moving to Istanbul or Ankara, he preferred practicing law in Diyarbakır. Therefore, he received massive respect among the Kurdish people and the 49ers in particular. Before his imprisonment, he was actively involved in the DP and the PRP, aiming to create a "haven within mainstream political parties for Kurds facing severe political pressure" (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 125). Following his release, he joined the TLP and became the Easterners faction's leader, alongside Tarık Ziya Ekinci. He was the TLP candidate for Diyarbakır in the 1966 senate elections (*TİP'nin 5 Haziran 1996 Senato Seçimleri aday listesi*, 1966, p. 1). After Mehmet Ali Aybar was ousted from the TLP leadership, Yıldırım contributed to the estrangement of Kurdish youth from the party. He also played a role in meetings that established the DDKO (Yıldız, 2008, p. 90). Though not a DDKO member, he was arrested in the 1971 Military Memorandum as part of the DDKO trial along with Anter and Kutlay. He formed "the Hearth Commune" with his 49er friends Kutlay and Anter after an ideological dispute in prison (Arslan, 2006, p. 161). He was released in 1974 and moved to Ankara the same year. Despite distancing himself from active politics, Yıldırım continued to support Kurdish activists. Staying away from politics for a time helped him to avoid arrest in the 1980 coup. With the emergence of the legal pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party and its successors after

numerous closures, Yıldırım held different high-level positions in these parties throughout the 1990s. He died in Ankara in 2015.

Information about Hasan Akkuş is limited, yet his life is interesting. Akkuş was from Urfa, around the same age as Canip Yıldırım. He studied economics in France, but his state-funded fellowship was canceled because of his Marxist beliefs, and he returned to Türkiye (Arslan, 2020, p. 88). Before imprisonment, Akkuş was an active participant in Kurdish intellectual circles, as he had known many inmates before. He held conversations with younger inmates eager to learn from his political knowledge. He remained politically active after his release and joined the TLP. He was on Mehmet Ali Aybar's candidate list for the party's general board elections, along with Canip Yıldırım (*2. Büyük Kongre GYK Aday Listesi*, t.y.). Later, he ran but failed to gain a parliamentary seat from Urfa. Naci Kutlay highlights that Akkuş's life was tragically cut short, as he died at a young age (Kutlay, 1994, p. 242).

Ziya Şerefhanoğlu, one of the "ringleaders" of the 49ers, was a descendant of Şerefhan Bitlisi, the Emir of Bitlis and author of the famous Sharafnama (Kemal, 1977, p. 10). He was from the Tigris Dorm generation and one of the five Kurdish Liberation Society founders along with Anter (Coşkun, 2022, para. 4). The judiciary used the narrative of an espionage operation involving the Iraqi government in Türkiye, based on Şerefhanoğlu's telegrams and meetings (Arslan, 2020, p. 79). Şerefhanoğlu had huge influence and strong ties with Kurdish youth in Ankara and Istanbul. Nevertheless, his stance and defense in court caused a split with the young left-wing 49ers, similar to Ali Karahan (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 108). In the 1961 elections, he secured the primary nomination for a parliamentary seat from the PRP but was ultimately blocked by the party's central office. During this time, he also served as a member of the provincial general assembly (Çoker, 1998, p. 539-40). In 1963, along with Sait Elçi, he attempted to launch a magazine called *Reya Rast* (The Right Path). They even printed promotion brochures, but their efforts were derailed by the trial of the 23ers. (Temel, 2015, pp. 353-54).

Şerefhanoğlu ran as an independent candidate and was elected as a senator for Bitlis in 1964 (Kaynar, 2019, p. 574). However, he faced a political smear campaign. Ultranationalists, led by Nihal Atsız, campaigned for his expulsion from the senate for

being a Kurdish nationalist and ultimately succeeded (Atsız, 1964, p. 7). By 1967, he went into exile to avoid jail (Abdurrahmanoğlu, 2016, para. 18). While residing in Beirut, Şerefhanoğlu kept links with the KDP and Barzani (Akar, 1999, p. 161). He met with young Kurdish activists from Türkiye, such as Kemal Burkay. He passed away in 1982 and was buried in Larnaca, Cyprus (Hürkan, 2010, p. 54).

Şevket Turan was one of the few individuals of Kurdish origin to achieve the rank of major during the Republican era. His grandfather was a sheik from Hazro, Diyarbakır, and his father served as a civil servant in Midyat during the Republic, basically belonging to the Kurdish upper class (Temel, 2022, para 1). Like Ali Karahan, Turan also lived in Ankara. He, Karahan, and Sait Ramanlı (the father of Mustafa Ramanlı) were neighbors. Turan had been monitored by Turkish intelligence since 1956, according to police records (Arik, 2011, p. 470). Turan was in touch with Kurdish youth through Ali Karahan and supported them financially. This relationship was notable for the Kurdish youth, as meeting an active-duty military officer who openly embraced his Kurdishness was unexpected. His hospitalization during his incarceration elevated his status among young prisoners, who chose him as their representative following a brief prison rebellion (Y. Kaya, 2006, p. 99). After his release, Turan pursued a political path aligned with his social class. However, instead of joining mainstream political parties, he ran as an independent candidate for Siirt when Batman was still a district of Siirt in the 1965 and 1969 elections unsuccessfully (Temel, 2022, para 8).

Ali Karahan was a lawyer from Siverek. He belonged to the Kurdish feudal nobility and was the uncle of Necati Siyahkan, another 49er (D. Karahan Mengü, personal communication, 18.02.2024). He lived in Ankara and was from the Tigris Dorm generation. Karahan had previously served as a judge in many Kurdish towns, such as Şemdinli. However, he was expelled from his post because of his pro-Kurdish attitude (Önder, 1990, p. 168). He was the main organizer of the Eastern Nights at Tigris Dorm, where he showed his knowledge of Kurdish folklore (Ekinci, 2013, pp. 156-57). Karahan also maintained close ties with the Sheikh Said family, which enabled him to earn respect among the Erzurum network in Ankara. In the 1954 elections, the Sheikh Said family endorsed him to run as a candidate for deputy representing Erzurum from the DP, but

Celal Bayar rejected his candidacy. His efforts later paved the way for Abdülmelik Fırat to become a DP deputy (Kaya, 2005, pp. 96-8). Before his arrest, Karahan made preliminary efforts to publish a magazine called *Mezopotamya*, which aimed to address the Kurdish issue, earning him respect among Kurdish youth (Kutlay, 1994, p. 48). However, he refused to participate in the rebellion in Harbiye, which alienated him from the younger generation. After his release, he continued his political career in parliamentary politics. Surprisingly, he joined the Turkish nationalist Republican Villagers Nation Party, possibly influenced by his close friend Faik Bucak, who was the chairman of the same party's Urfa branch (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 1966, p. 377). Karahan became an NTP deputy for Hakkari in 1965. However, his imprisonment as a 49er continued to haunt him, leading to his revoke of the parliamentary seat in 1968 (Dunbay, 2016, p. 170).

Mehmet Selim Kılıçoğlu was a member of the influential Cibran tribe from Varto, Muş. He was Colonel Halit Bey of Cibran's nephew, an officer in both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic's army, who was executed in 1925 for being a Kurdish separatist (Ş. Karataş, 2016, para. 1). Kılıçoğlu held the rank of senior lieutenant in the Turkish army, which positioned him as a critical figure in portraying the notion of a "threat within the state." However, there was no evidence to associate him with communism. On the contrary, Kılıçoğlu was a devout and conservative individual (Yüksel, 2015, p. 104). His interaction with Kurdish youth, like those of Şevket Turan, was out of philanthropy. Even though he did not participate in active political life and engaged in trade after his, he remained interested in the Kurdish issue and helped many researchers (Sever, 2022, p. 152). Unlike Kılıçoğlu, Mehmet Bilgin, who was another career soldier 49er and 23er, later entered politics and was elected as an MP for NTP from Bingöl in 1969 (Yıldırım & Zeynel, 2010, p. 393). Subsequently, he joined Erbakan's National Salvation Party (NSP) and became a senator in 1975 (Karataş, 2021, p. 283).

Esat Cemiloğlu was a Kurdish noble and the oldest 49er. He was a boxer, poet, and agricultural engineer. He was a member of the Cemilpaşazade family from Diyarbakır, and his grandfather, Ahmet Cemil, was the family's leader (Işık, 2010, p. 11). Thanks to his social status, he met many high-profile Kurds, even in his early years, such as Said

Nursi (Eratilla, 2021, para. 1). He practiced boxing while attending high school in Istanbul. He later moved to France to pursue his education and represented Türkiye in boxing. He founded "Ankara Boxing Club" after returning to Türkiye (Bulgurcuoğlu, 1991, p. 17). He moved back to Diyarbakır in the early 50s after working as an engineer for various state institutions. He was actively involved in the DP and maintained close contact with influential political figures. His friendship with Şerefhanoğlu, Dolak, and Turan eventually led to his arrest and turned him into a 49er. His imprisonment fueled a certain level of radicalization. Elected from the PRP, his brother Nejat became mayor of Diyarbakır for ten years. His son Felat was among those who experienced the harshest forms of state oppression and was subjected to severe torture in Diyarbakır Prison during the 1980 Coup (Çağlayan, 2018, p. 117). Although not active in Kurdish politics, he was always remembered as a respected figure.

As mentioned previously, Ökkeş Karadağ was not involved in Kurdish political circles. He was arrested for writing a letter to Dolak. In his statement, he described himself as "just a simple villager" and asserted that his actions, which were rooted in hospitality, had no connection to the accusations against him. He was ultimately acquitted and received no punishment from the trial. Although he refrained from engaging in politics after his release from prison, his son has pursued a career in journalism and filmmaking, taking a critical stance in the political arena (Bayrak, 2019, para. 7).

Muhsin Şavata shared a familiar story with Karadağ. Şavata had no relations with the other 40ers and was arrested for sending a letter to the DP officials about broadcasting Kurdish radio. Although he, like Karadağ, had no involvement in politics in their later life, his son, Bahoz, joined the Kurdish separatist organization Kawa, which followed a Maoist ideology, during its rise in the 1970s and spent some years in prison (Kısacık, 2010, p. 115). Bahoz focused on researching Kurdish history and continues to publish his work in periodicals such as *Kürt Tarihi* (Kurdish History).

Now, I will examine the biographies of young 49ers. First, I will look at individuals who were not engaged in radical politics. Second, I will list those involved in militant activities in left-wing politics (DDKO and KDPinT) and those with a dominantly nationalistic agenda (KDP).

Fevzi Kartal was a young 49er and a member of the influential Bruki tribe in Van. His uncle, Kinyas Kartal, was the leader of the tribe and served as the provincial chairman of the DP's Van branch. He was later an MP for its successor parties for five terms. (Ebiri, 2020, p. 189). After the 1960 Coup, Fevzi Kartal's father, Bala Kartal, was exiled to Sivas – known as the 55ers Incident – along with brother Kinyas and other Kurdish notables, such as Faik Bucak and many members of Sheik Said's family, according to the rationale of the law "to carry out certain social reforms, to dismantle the existing medieval order in Türkiye, to abolish institutions such as landownership and religious sheikhdoms, and to prevent the exploitation of citizens" (İba, 2015, 102-103). Fevzi Kartal, like his uncle, joined the Justice Party (JP) and became a senator from Van in 1979. With his uncle's support, he managed to defeat his rival, Ferit Melen who was a former prime minister, and won the senatorial seat for Van (A. Özer, 2003, 117). Although Fevzi Kartal preferred a political party that reflected his class, his brother Remzi Kartal became the Kurdish National Congress's co-chairman (*Remzi Kartal'ın kardeşi Fevzi Kartal toprağa verildi*, 2019, para. 1). Interestingly, Remzi became a militant in Dr. Şivan's radical KDPinT before the 1980 Coup (Degli Esposti, 2022, p. 155).

Mustafa Ramanlı came from an influential family in Batman. His father, Sait, was the leader of the Ramanlı tribe and the first mayor of Batman. Ramanlı was a law student in Ankara and Fevzi Kartal's schoolmate. Their fathers were exiled to Sivas together. Following their return from exile, Sait was reelected as mayor (Ramanlı, 2021, para. 9). Mustafa later took his father's post and became the mayor of Batman from the JP, serving between 1968 and 1977. Ramanlıs established a political dynasty in Batman, similar to the Kartals in Van.

Nurettin Yılmaz began showing interest in center-left politics, whereas he came from a conservative Seyda family from Cizre. In the 1973 elections, he became a deputy for Mardin from the PRP. His popularity allowed him to return to Parliament in the 1977 elections, this time as an independent MP (Tan, 2009, p. 364). Among 49ers who remained active in parliamentary politics, Yılmaz was one of the most severely persecuted. He was incarcerated in the notorious Diyarbakır Prison by the 1980 junta, allegedly for being Barzani's military officer (Mavioğlu, 2006, p. 158). Even though he

wanted to rejoin his former party after his release, he was blacklisted as a Kurdish nationalist. In 1987, he became a deputy from Turgut Özal's Motherland Party. He was the mediator in establishing friendly relations between the Özal and Iraqi Kurdish leaders Mesud Barzani and Jalal Talabani (Tan, 2009, p. 485).

Some young 49ers who did not participate in radical or parliamentary politics nonetheless held various positions in civil life and in the state apparatus. For instance, Feyzullah Demirtaş retired from his position as *Cumhuriyet başsavcısı* (the Chief Public Prosecutor). However, he remained a well-known figure in the Kurdish intellectual sphere. Hailing from the noble lineage of Palu, Demirtaş also authored a book about the Mirdasi dynasty, to which he belonged (Demirtaş, 2005, p. 10).

Mehmet Özer was from Siverek and was tried without detention. He was a medical student at Ankara University and Remzi Bucak's assistant (M. Özer, 2010, p. 159). Although Özer was never involved in politics later in his life, his 49er background chased him. He worked as a doctor in Kurdish towns such as Baskil, İdil, and Yüksekova as he was exiled frequently. Özer later became an associate professor at Diyarbakır Medical School and became the head of the Urology department in the 1970s, but was dismissed after the 1980 coup.

Sait Bingöl was born in Bingöl in 1934 to a poor family. He was a founding member of the Bingöl Higher Education Association and played a key role in organizing the Newroz celebration in Heybeliada in 1956 (*Sait Bingöl vefat etti*, 2012, para. 1). While studying economics at Istanbul University, he was arrested. After his release, he joined the State Planning Organization in 1965. In 1970, he was expelled from his position after describing the Eastern issue as an ethnic, cultural, and political problem in his report titled "East and Southeast." Following this, he could no longer work in any governmental institutions and instead became a freelance accountant (Hatun, 2024, para. 3). Although he did not remain active in politics, he supported the local initiatives of legal Kurdish parties, established a student dormitory for underprivileged Kurdish students, and provided scholarships and assistance. Thus, he earned great respect from the Kurdish community (Ongan, 2013, para. 14). He died in Bingöl in 2012.

Fadıl Budak hailed from the Zirkan tribe in Hazro, Diyarbakır, known as the "Beys of Hazro," a title reflecting his family's historical significance in the region (Budak, 2023, p. 153). He was a law student in İstanbul when he was arrested. After his release from prison, Budak launched *Deng* magazine along with other 49ers (*Deng No:1-2 (1963)*, 1998, p. 9). Following the arrests of the 23ers, he quit politics and became a civil servant. Budak worked as a prosecutor in Nusaybin in 1968 (Beşikçi, 2024, para. 9). Nonetheless, he used his tribal status to aid in establishing the TLP branch in Hazro, and collaborated with his relative and future DDKO leader, Yümnü Budak (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 195). He died at a young age (*Deng No:1-2 (1963)*, 1998, p. 83).

Şahabettin Septioğlu was from one of the most popular right-wing families in Elazığ. Like Feyzullah Demirtaş, Septioğlu was born in Palu and related to Sheikh Said's family (Sürmeli, 2024, p. 248). He studied agricultural engineering in Ankara. He was a second lieutenant when he was arrested. Çamlıbel states in his memoir that while Septioğlu's nickname was Lumumba, he held an extremely conservative worldview (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 277). Information about his later life is limited; however, Malmisanij notes that he was an NSP member (Malmîsanij & Lewendî, 1989, p. 44).

Koço Elbistan was born in the Hassa district of Hatay. His father, Koco Ağa, was a leader of the Sinemillis, a nomadic Kurdish-Alevi tribe that historically extended from Maraş and Pazarcık to Hatay. During the French occupation of Hatay, Koco Ağa led the resistance against the French forces. Koco Ağa was detained but secured his tribe's rights in their region. His negotiations resulted in the French granting him authority over local security and a subsequent boost of charisma among local people. After the Turkish annexation of Hatay, Koco Ağa's reputation endured for leading his tribe to become Turkish citizens (Bulut, 2022, p. 5-12). In 1952, Koço was accepted into the Military Medical Academy but decided to pursue a civilian career at the Ankara Medical Faculty instead.

Along with his brother Sıtkı, studying law in the same city, Koço became a regular participant in the Kurdish social environment. Since the Elbistan family was near the Syrian border and their father was respected, they could quickly smuggle illegal books and journals, such as Nuri Dersimi's memoirs, to Türkiye. This allowed young Kurdish

college students to access important literature to some extent (Ceren, 2020, p. 98). However, Koco was arrested shortly before graduating, while Sıtkı was tried without detention. Koco was later released from prison. In their post-prison years, Koco and Sıtkı did not engage in politics but stayed in close contact with many political public figures such as Yalçın Küçük (Küçük, 1997, p. 104). Still, their brother Mehmet remained active in the Kurdish cause and founded the Confederation of European Kurdistan Associations (KOMKAR) in the 1980s. (Beşikçi, 2020, p. 1).

Fetullah Kakioğlu was another 49er who was not detained. Like Yaşar Kaya, Kakioğlu was from Iğdır and attended Kabataş High School. He later studied at Istanbul University. He was active in the National Turkish Student Union and became the president of his faculty's student association ("Cumhuriyet", 19.07.1961, p. 3). Meanwhile, he showed interest in journalism. He edited an issue of *Atlı Karınca*, the annual publication of his union's faculty branch, to be distributed at the department's economics fair ("Atlı Karınca (MTTB İktisat Fakültesi)", 1961, p. 1). His nephew and researcher, Mücahit Özden Hun, offers detailed insights into Kakioğlu's life. According to Hun, Kakioğlu had met a diverse array of people, including Alparslan Türkeş and U.S. President Lyndon Johnson. After his friends were released, he became involved in the publication of Deng magazine. He maintained a connection with Enver Aytekin, founder of *Sosyal Yayınları* and a co-founder of the TLP. Along with his companions from the 49ers and Aytekin, Kakioğlu was also tried in the 23ers Case (Hun, 2024a, para. 133). In 1966, he initiated the short-lived journal *Karma Ekonomi* (Makal, 1969, p. 79). He ran a press office, KA-YI Printing, which produced business cards, invoices, and similar items. Decades later, he translated a Kurdish dictionary for Aytekin's publishing house (Blau, 1991, p. 1).

According to Ruşen Aslan, the ideological split between nationalist and socialist thought among Kurdish youth originates from the 49ers. The ideological polarization became more visible as some Kurdish intellectuals joined the TLP from 1963 onward, while others founded the TKDP (Çelik, 2021, p. 201). In contrast to the TLP, TKDP had no notable presence among university students. The TLP, however, gained influence through its speeches that resonated with Kurdish sentiments. Meanwhile, the "Easterners Group" emerged in the TLP's 1966 General Congress in Malatya. On the one hand, some 49ers,

such as Anter, Şerefhanoğlu, Kırmızıtoprak, and Elçi, were among the founders of the TKDP. On the other hand, Canip Yıldırım was a leader in the latter (Güneş, 2013, p. 98). The Easterners became more active through their journals and grassroots efforts like rallies, particularly in universities like Ankara, Istanbul, and Erzurum, where socialist Kurdish youngsters led vibrant campaigns (Çelik, 2021, p. 202).

Naci Kutlay emerged as a prominent figure among the younger members of the 49ers, acting as a link between Anter and the younger generation due to his age. Though from Iğdır, his middle-class peasant family later moved to Ağrı. He became immersed in the Kurdish community through the Ağrı Association and Ağrı Nights, where he met people like Ali Karahan (Kutlay, 1998, p. 38-9). Despite studying medicine in Ankara, he was known by Kurdish youth circles in Istanbul. His popularity soared during his imprisonment, attributed to his nurturing nature, winning the admiration of young individuals such as Kırmızıtoprak, who edited the *Ceride-i Dersim* newspaper. After his release, Kutlay remained active in political life. He served as the delegate of the Easterners for the TLP and co-founded the DDKO's Diyarbakır branch (A. Çelik, 2021, p. 204). He was incarcerated after the 1971 Military Memorandum. He left the TLP and joined the PRP. Kutlay ran unsuccessfully against Kasım Küfrevi in the 1979 Ağrı senate elections (Çetin, 1980, p. 404). Naci Kutlay's candidacy for the PRP despite being a 49er and an ex-TLP member caused a backlash in the nationalist press of that time (Oktay, 2019, p. 245). Kutlay was rearrested after the 1980 military coup and spent over fifteen years in exile in Sweden. In those years, he emerged as a leading intellectual on Kurdish thought, authoring numerous books and articles that examined the effects of Turkish modernization and the emergence of a Turkish nation-state on the Kurdish people, its socioeconomic situation, and the subsequent rise of nationalism. He supported the Kurdish socialist diaspora's various publishing initiatives, such as Komal and Bergeh. Upon returning to Türkiye, Kutlay took a leadership position in the DEP (H. Çağlayan, 2007, p. 127). In the 2007 elections, he ran as a deputy candidate for Ağrı under the joint independent list supported by the Kurdish movement and leftist Turkish socialist organizations, known as "*Bin Umut Adayları*" (Thousand Hopes Candidates), but was not elected. Today, Kutlay remains one of the few surviving members of the 49ers, alongside Ziya Acar.

Yaşar Kaya was the youngest detainee and the most adept at adapting to urban life. Originating from a reputable family in Kars, he was the maternal nephew of Celal Yardımcı, the DP's minister of National Education. Kaya was from Kars and moved to Istanbul to study at Kabataş High School (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 47). He delivered the telegram petitions to newspapers that precipitated the trial to the press. In academic and political circles, he garnered the nickname "Castro Yaşar." He was detained while enrolled at the Faculty of Economics in Istanbul. Upon his release, he continued his relations with other 49ers, contributing to the magazine *Deng* as the editor (Kaynar, 2020, p. 587). Throughout his political and social endeavors, he sustained a close relationship with Musa Anter, and both were tried together in the Trial of the 23ers. He married Yurda Kaya, a Kurdish feminist and socialist activist. He refrained from political activities after his vigorous engagement in the 1960s despite an invitation from TLP leader Mehmet Ali Aybar. He worked in the private sector, though he maintained connections with Kurdish political activists (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 175). After a two-decade hiatus, he returned to journalism and political activism. He collaborated with Musa Anter at Free Agenda newspaper and assumed the role of chairman of the Democracy Party. However, both the party and the newspaper faced intense state repression. Kaya was the second person on a list of to-be-assassinated Kurdish businessmen, prepared by Tansu Çiller's administration. (Özgüden, 2019, p. 162). Concurrently, journalist Uğur Mumcu accused Kaya of being a Kurdish racist, citing Yasin Gültaş, an informant of the 49ers' trial (Mumcu, 1993, p. 17). Due to Anter and Serhat's assassinations and the ongoing political pressures he faced, Kaya moved to Germany in 1994. In 1995, he helped establish the Kurdistan Government in Exile and later became its president, succeeding Ismet Cherif Vanly. (İ. S. Işık, 2024, p. 418). Kaya returned to Türkiye after two decades but passed away shortly thereafter in Erbil.

Hüseyin Oğuz Üçok returned to Diyarbakır after finishing his dental education in Istanbul. Along with Canip Yıldırım, he was appointed as a general congress delegate of the Easterners faction in the TLP (Arslan, 2020, p. 101). Tarık Ziya Ekinci notes that Üçok preserved his good contacts with his TKDP-member 49er friends, gradually aligning himself with the "nationalist faction" in TLP's Diyarbakır branch (Ekinci, 2013, p. 413). He played an crucial role as one of the founders of the DDKO in Diyarbakır

(*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Dava Dosyası: 1*, 1975, p. 42). Owing to his political engagements, he was investigated for allegations of separatism after the 1971 military memorandum (*Diyarbakır SYNT Komutanlığı'nın 14 No'lu Bildirisi*, 1971). Unfortunately, there is no information on his post-1971 political activity.

Necati Siyahkan was from Siverek and was Ali Karahan's relative. He was a law student in Istanbul when he was arrested. Following his release, he adopted socialist politics. In 1961, he was among the intellectuals who endorsed the "*Yön Manifesto*," advocating for a state-led economy to address Türkiye'social, economic, and cultural challenges (Atılgan, 2018, p. 325). He returned to Siverek and mentored revolutionary youth leaders, including Necmettin Büyükkaya and Ferit Uzun. He founded and headed the TLP's Siverek branch and ran for senate unsuccessfully from Mardin in 1979 (Ongan, 2022, para. 6). In the 1980 military coup, Siyahkan was incarcerated for 13 months in Diyarbakır Prison. After his release, he returned to Ankara and signed the "Intellectuals' Petition," which condemned the coup and its human rights abuses (*Aydınlar Dilekçesi Davası*, 1986, p. 57). While keeping in touch with his comrades from the Kurdish socialist movement, he continued his political engagement within the TLP-TCP framework. Siyahkan emerged as a significant figure in politics and literature during this time. His poem "Nataşa" was quite popular among the left-wing activists in the 1970s. His identity as the poet remained largely unknown until he published a compilation of poems with his name for the first time in 1988 (Siyahkan, 2021, p. 23). He spent his final years in Ankara, where he died in 2006.

Yusuf Kaçar was a left-wing 49er from the Civarik region of Dersim, like Kırmızıtoprak. After release, he lived in Ankara for a while and enrolled at a university in Erzurum. As a result of the trauma caused by his time in jail, he never preferred being under the spotlight of political life while keeping in touch with Kurdish activists. He contributed to many events held in Erzurum[20], including opening some local branches of TLP (Burkay,

[20] Ruşen Arslan believes that the political activities of young Kurdish leftists in Erzurum remain underexplored and present valuable research opportunities (Çelik, 2021, p. 202). Thus, a further study focusing on Kaçar's life, particularly his days in Erzurum, would be a fruitful topic for other academics.

2001, pp. 161-62). In his political life, Kaçar supported the TLP and aligned with the Easterner group and later the SPK. However, Kaçar died at a very young age in the early 1970s. Unfortunately, a few sources, such as Burkay's memoir, mention his activities.

Ziya Acar was a left-wing 49er from Diyarbakır. He studied law in Ankara instead of Istanbul after his release. He shared an apartment with his former inmate Kaçar and deepened his friendship with Kemal Burkay (Burkay, 2001, p. 150). He wed Bilge, the sister-in-law of Yusuf Azizoğlu (Y. Kaya, 2006, p. 96). Acar was part of the Easterners faction within the TLP and later became the lawyer for the arrested party members following the 1971 military memorandum. In 1968, he was a lawyer for the TKDP Antalya Trial along with Edip Altunakar (Arslan, 2019, p. 7). Although he was among the co-founders of the KDPinT with Dr. Şivan, he left the party shortly after (Aydın, 2021, para 9). Nevertheless, Acar later became a founding member of the SPK (Gün, 2018, p. 285). Just before the military coup in 1980, Acar went abroad and initiated various efforts, including an appeal to the United Nations, to protest the systematic oppression of Kurds by the military, while referring to its historical background (Burkay vd., 1981, p. 25). Now Acar resides in Paris and, along with Kutlay, remains the only surviving 49ers.

Medet Serhat, previously known as Yöş, was born in Iğdır, then part of Kars. His father, İsa, was exiled for not collaborating with the Turkish army in 1926, and he returned after the DP lifted the ban (Hun, 2024, para. 14-15). He was a dynamic law student recognized for his leadership among Kurdish youth. While in Istanbul, he formed friendships with Yaşar Kaya and other 49ers. First, he emerged as a leader of the right-wing inmate youngsters in parallel with his conservative background, and actively led discussions in prison. Later, he adopted left-wing ideology. He changed his surname to Serhat, the Kurdish name for his birthplace, symbolizing his enhanced connection to his heritage (Hun, 2024, para. 25). After prison, Serhat joined *Deng* magazine staff but was rearrested in the trial of the 23ers.

As a lawyer, Serhat worked for both class and Kurdish rights. He collaborated with the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Türkiye and served on the organizing committee for the notorious 1977 May Day (Güreli, 1979, p. 254). By the 1970s and 1980s, he recognized that the Kurdish issue was fundamentally an ethnic matter, separate from class struggle (Ozoglu, 2012, p. 157). Despite his strong Kurdish identity, Serhat only ran for office under the PRP (Güner, 1998, para. 5). After the 1980 military coup, he was arrested alongside Nurettin Yılmaz in the *Barış Derneği* Case (Özgüden, 1986, p. 190). He served as a human rights lawyer for many years and founded the *Çağdaş Avukatlar* (Contemporary Lawyers) group. He was also a founding member of the *Toplum ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Vakfı* (Studies of Society and Law Foundation) (Değirmenci, 2022, p. 141). He represented persecuted DEP deputies when their parliamentary immunities were revoked in 1994. Later that year, he was assassinated (İ. S. Işık, 2024, p. 399-400).

While Yavuz Çamlıbel provided extensive details about the trial, information about his personal life remains scarce. He was born in 1934 in Doğubeyazıt. He graduated from the Sultanahmet Faculty of Economic Sciences in Istanbul. He was arrested while serving in the army as a reserve officer. In prison, he associated himself with leftist students. He was exiled to Muğla after his release. He lost social rights and struggled with unemployment following his conviction in the trial of the 49ers. He later worked as a freelance accountant and financial advisor (Çamlıbel, 2010, p. 1). According to Kemal Peköz, he advocated Kurdish politics and participated in party gatherings regularly despite his age (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 8). He assisted researchers working on Kurdish culture and history (Alakom, 2004, p. 74). He wrote books on the 49ers trial and Musa Anter's life. In 2008, he was one of the signatories of a declaration called “Call for a Peaceful Settlement of the Kurdish Problem in Türkiye,” which was published in the International Herald Tribune by the Paris Kurdish Institute’s call (“International Herald Tribune”, 20.05.2008, p. 6). Çamlıbel died in Istanbul in 2012.

Mehmet Ali Dinler was a law student from Cizre. He studied in Ankara with other students from Cizre, such as Nurettin Yılmaz and Şerafettin Elçi. He remained active in politics after his release from prison. Along with Reşo Zilan and Hikmet Buluttekin, he

founded the Kurdistan Freedom Society, one of the first illegal Kurdish organizations established in the late 1960s (Arslan, 2020, p. 111). Dinler joined the TKDP in 1975. He became the party's general secretary, succeeding Derviş Akgül, also known as Derwêşê Sado, after the TKDP congress in Siirt (Akkurt, 2019, p. 331). After the 1980 coup, he maintained his ties with KDP while placing more emphasis on his career. He died in 2012 and was buried in Cizre with soil brought from Mustafa Barzani's grave, as he requested in his will (*KDP'nin Eski Genel Sekreteri Tedavi Gördüğü Hastanede Hayatını Kaybetti*, 2012, para. 4).

Şerafettin Elçi was born in 1938 in Cizre, Şırnak. He belonged to a family thought to be descendants of the Prophet, and both his grandfather and father were exiled after the Sheikh Said Rebellion (H. Kaya, 2012, p. 15). He studied law in Ankara and became active in *hemşeri dernekleri*. Elçi was not arrested in the trial of the 49ers (Çamlıbel, 2015, p. 236). Elçi worked briefly as a civil servant before returning to politics. He joined the TKDP with encouragement from Liceli Fehmi, Sheikh Said's secretary during the rebellion in 1925 (H. Kaya, 2012, p. 115). Elçi met Mustafa Barzani personally while serving as a KDP executive. He was imprisoned for being a TKDP member in 1971. He later joined the JP, urged by his brother Eşref, and became Mardin's deputy. Elçi was among eleven deputies who resigned from the JP in the Güneş Motel Incident.[21] He subsequently served as Minister of Public Works in Bülent Ecevit's government between 1978 and 1979 (A. Akar, 2002, p. 12). However, he soon became a scapegoat for saying Kurdish people exist in Türkiye. This comment caused nationalist outrage. The Ecevit cabinet was dissolved 17 hours after his statement. Elçi was imprisoned again for several years for admitting Kurdish existence publicly by the 1980 coup judges (Köylü, 2017, p. 170).

Şerafettin Elçi founded and led the short-lived Party of the Democratic Masses, which was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1999, and the Participatory Democracy Party

[21]Güneş Motel Incident was a political scandal in Türkiye. After the 1977 elections, the PRP lacked a parliamentary majority to form a government. Bülent Ecevit, the PRP's chairman, held a meeting with twelve JP deputies in a motel, offering ministerial positions in exchange for their support in the upcoming vote of confidence (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2020, p. 38).

in 2006. These parties advocated for the recognition of Kurdish rights within a federal framework (Bora, 2017, p. 885). He returned to parliament in the 2011 elections in alliance with the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party but died a year later. The airport in his hometown was named in his honor.

Sait Kırmızıtoprak, known by the pseudonym Dr. Şivan, was a Kurdish intellectual, politician, and revolutionary leader. He was born in 1935 in the Civarik village of Dersim, just like Kaçar. His entire family was wiped out in the Dersim Massacre (A. Özer, 2022, para. 8). Kırmızıtoprak went to the medical school in Istanbul. He was a member of the Tunceli Cultural Association and wrote articles in *Ceride-i Dersim*. He was well-known in Kurdish social circles in Istanbul and Ankara. He was a leftist before the arrest and led the leftist group in debates in prison. After his release, he got his college degree and worked as a doctor. He also wrote columns for *Yön* magazine, in which he criticized Anter, as will be elaborated later. However, after being convicted by the trial of the 49ers, he lost his right to work as a civil servant. The court decision fueled his rupture from mainstream politics (Kutlay, 1998, p. 93). He believed the TLP was hypocritical about the Kurdish problem and he decided to initiate an armed movement. He fled to Iraqi Kurdistan to join Barzani's peshmerga forces with Elçi, Balkaş, and Savaş. They established KDPinT, a splinter faction from TKDP, in 1969.

The bitter conflict between Kırmızıtoprak and Sait Elçi factions ended with their deaths, known as the "Two Saits Incident". The incident has remained a subject of speculation and controversy in Kurdish history (Arik, 2011, p. 383). Even though the exact circumstances of their murders remained unclear, it is believed that a combination of many factors, such as internal Kurdish rivalries, as well as foreign influence, played roles. Some accounts suggest that the Iraqi Kurdish leadership, specifically Mustafa Barzani, may have ordered Kırmızıtoprak's assassination in retaliation with Sait Elçi's murder. In contrast, other theories suggest that Turkish intelligence officials may have been involved in order to weaken the growing Kurdish radicalization by wiping out its militant leader (Şur, 2018, p. 257).

Sait Elçi was born in 1925 in Bingöl into a relatively wealthy Zaza family. He belonged to the intermediate generation between the Old Kurds and the Young Kurds because of

his age. He was the DP's Bingöl chair and was praised by Celal Bayar (Duman, 2021, para. 6). In the 1957 elections, he ran for the Bingöl seat as the RNP candidate unsuccessfully (Beltekin, 2024, p. 43). Elçi was in Kurdish circles in Istanbul. He aligned with the conservative group in prison. After his release, he continued his activism. He wrote columns for the *Dicle-Fırat* (Tigris-Euphrates) newspaper and tried to launch the *Reya Rast* newspaper with Şerefhanoğlu. He was rearrested in the 23ers Trial. Upon his release, he became one of the TKDP's founders in 1965, under Faik Bucak's leadership. After Bucak's suspicious assassination, Elçi assumed the role of the party's leader (Konuk, 2024, para. 7).

Although he was not a leftist or socialist, Elçi delivered several speeches at Eastern Rallies organized by the TLP since he was a well-known orator. As İbrahim Güçlü noted, along with Faik Bucak and Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Elçi was one of the three idols of Kurdish students in the 1960s (Güçlü, 2021, para. 2). In 1968, he was arrested again in the KDP Trial. Due to increasing political pressure, he moved to Iraqi Kurdistan at the suggestion of Dr. Şivan. Tragically, he was killed in the Two Saits Incident.

Nazmi Balkaş was a forestry engineering student in Istanbul. He was from the Lice region of Diyarbakır. His brother, Cezmi, was his classmate in the same department, while their younger brother, İsmet, studied medicine in Istanbul. Unfortunately, all three brothers were 49ers. Knowing each other before the imprisonment, Nazmi became one of Kırmızıtoprak's closest friends and actively supported his stance on the need for an anti-colonialist armed struggle. He went to Iraqi Kurdistan to join Barzani's forces. Using Soro as a nom de guerre, he became a central committee member in Kırmızıtoprak's KDPinT until its dissolution ("Sosyalizm ve Kürtler", 1988, p. 2121). Since returning to Türkiye became impossible, he stayed in Beirut with his comrades, such as Necmettin Büyükkaya, for a while. Balkaş was also an active member of the Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations. He was elected as an independent mayor of Lice twice: first in the 1977 local elections along with other Kurdish activists like Mehdi Zana and Edip Solmaz, and again in the 1989 local elections (Karadoğan, 2020, para. 4). He held the office during the tragic 1993 Lice Incidents. He died in 1999.

Faik Savaş was born into a poor family from the Genç region of Bingöl. While studying medicine in Istanbul, he became friends with Kırmızıtoprak. Even though Savaş got his degree, he was banned from practicing medicine as he was convicted in the trial of the 49ers, like Kırmızıtoprak. Eventually, he joined Kırmızıtoprak, Balkaş, and Elçi in Iraq (Zuexpayij Kaya, 2018, para. 33). Tragically, his nephew, Abdüllatif Savaş, was executed by Kırmızıtoprak's men on espionage accusation (Bilgin, 1990, pp. 332-33). After the Two Saits Incident, Savaş left the party membership and Iraqi Kurdistan, and moved to Germany, where he resumed his medical career. In the 1980s, he returned to Iraqi Kurdistan to work as a doctor but had to flee again during Saddam Hussein's massacres against the Kurds and moved back to Germany in 1993. After Saddam's downfall, he moved back to Duhok in 2003 and passed away in 2018 (Faik, 2018, para. 4). Although he distanced himself from politics, Savaş maintained close friendships with Kurdish political circles throughout his life.

2.4. Aftermath: Post-Prison Initiatives and the Resurgence in the 1960s

While the trial of the 49ers was a manifestation of the state's repressive policy towards Kurdish intellectuals, it also made new trajectories inevitable in laying the foundation for envisaged Kurdish movements. The first post-prison initiatives were mainly journalistic and intended to enhance Kurdish visibility and promote a national discourse. Younger 49ers first published various newspapers and magazines while meeting with like-minded Kurdish activist circles that emerged in the post-1960 Coups's political environment. Working on an agenda together led to inevitable disagreements and eventually fortified ideological divisions. Finally, they established their political organizations and reached to the phase C that Baskın Oran and Miroslav Hroch define.

2.4.1. Sait Kırmızıtoprak (*Yön*) vs Musa Anter (*Barış Dünyası*): First Public Debate

In the 1960's crossroads, the Kurdish movement began to mold into certain ideological forms. Eventually, the dispute became public after a debate between Kırmızıtoprak and

Anter in 1962. Socialist youngsters now tended to draw more attention to the class dimension in the Kurdish question. In contrast, moderates tended to focus primarily on fundamental rights.

Barış Dünyası was an economics and politics magazine launched by Ahmet Hamdi Başar in 1962. Başar was a Turkish intellectual who identified himself as a liberal and advocated for open discussions on addressing the Kurdish issue (McDowall, 2021, p. 404). Musa Anter started contributing articles to this magazine along with Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, Anter's 49er peer and the owner of *İleri Yurt*. Anter authored a series of articles titled "The Eastern Case," starting with the second issue published in May 1962. His unheard ideas and bold statements eventually led to a massive debate in the Turkish media, expressing their disregard for the existence of an alleged Kurdish problem whatsoever (Yıldırım, 1962, p. 6):

> "The Eastern issue cannot be resolved through a regime of violence and prohibitions. We've abolished the aghas, but what good does that do? In today's primitive conditions, they still hold certain social functions. Without establishing institutions to take over these roles and without improving the people's material and spiritual conditions in alignment with their beliefs and nature, abolishing the aghas would cause more harm than good ("Barış Dünyası", May 1962, p. 8)".

Anter criticized the state's approach to the Kurdish problem, as "treating a madman with a stick" and suggested various solutions ("Barış Dünyası", May 1962, p. 10). First, he recommended clarifying the region's borders and developing a tailored growth plan that initially includes agricultural and settlement projects, ready to launch within a few years. Second, he advocated for establishing a curriculum that enables Kurds to be educated in their native language while learning Turkish. He also demanded the Kurdish people's freedom of the press. Third, Anter criticized land reform efforts and recommended state-sponsored cooperatives and facilities to boost land productivity and surplus. He pointed out that Aghas had already taken the redistributed lands; therefore, land ownership was essentially worthless without providing peasants with necessary resources such as machinery, irrigation, and loans. Thus, he stressed the necessity to give precedence to

industrial planning and promote private enterprise and investment as needed ("Barış Dünyası", May 1962, pp. 11-5).

Fifty-five Kurdish aghas, often being blamed as scapegoats for the "reactionary status quo" were exiled after the 1960 Coup. Challenging the common belief, Anter suggested that the aghas were not as malicious as they are frequently depicted, and it's a fundamental right to express your native language, which should be protected under the constitution. Both Turkish public media people and an unexpected 49er wrote an article criticizing Anter. The following month, Kırmızıtoprak replied with a piece titled "Eastern Youth Respond to Barış Dünyası," published in *Yön*. Fourteen Kurdish activists visited the *Yön* office. A photo taken during their visit was published along with the article.[22] Kırmızıtoprak's tone was unexpectedly harsh as he criticized Anter's solution, labeling it as 'falling into the swamp of opportunism' (Yön, 13.07.1962, p. 12).

In his article, Tuncay Şur outlines several criticisms Kırmızıtoprak had of Anter's stance in his *Yön* column. First, as Şur pointed out, Kırmızıtoprak argued that the agha institution was not confined to Eastern and Southeastern regions; it also existed in various forms in the western provinces and major cities. He insisted that land reform should not be limited to Kurdish areas but nationwide, contrary to Anter's idea of articulating the Kurdish nobility to a capitalist development program. Second, he noted that private enterprise is a modern form of exploitation and warned that any land reform aimed at assimilating Kurds would obstruct genuine, nationwide reforms. Lastly, Kırmızıtoprak vehemently disagreed with Anter's implication that permitting Kurds to cultivate their language and folklore would inevitably lead to their assimilation into Turkish society, labeling such a notion as "fascism." He contended that advancing the Kurdish language and culture is not a route to dissolution but is crucial for preserving the Kurdish identity. Overall, for Kırmızıtoprak, the essence of the Kurdish issue arises more from class conflict than from cultural factors (Şur, 2018, p. 251).

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[22] While some of them, such as 49er Mehmet Ali Dinler, did not align with Kırmızıtoprak's revolutionary Marxism and embraced right-wing ideology (Göktaş, 1991, p. 121).

Both Dolak and Anter wrote response articles in the August 1962 issue. Dolak was conservative and right-leaning. However, he preferred working with Anter, as he did in *İleri Yurt,* while occasionally writing for other journals independently. Dolak, noting that he knew many of the young people whose photos were published in *Yön*, including Kırmızıtoprak, accused them of being "enemy of capital" and of not addressing the thousand-year-old Kurdish-Turkish fraternity, which he labeled as mere chauvinism. He claimed that they were confused individuals trying to defend both socialism and racism at the same time. Additionally, not only did he state his commitment to Anter's resolution, but he also argued that the invitation of capital, as proposed in the *Doğu Davamız* series, would create prosperity in Kurdish cities and prevent the migration of the Kurdish population to Turkish cities (Efhem, 1962, pp. 45-6).

Anter, on the other hand, sarcastically asked Kırmızıtoprak "if the Eastern youth rejected the fundamental human rights that *Barış Dünyası* wanted for people living in the East." He accused *Yön* of being hypocritical in its stance on the Kurdish issue, criticizing them for denying Kurds the same human rights they demanded for the peoples of Laos and Egypt, calling this a colonialist mindset. Moreover, referring to American expert William Winkle's suggestion to increase literacy rates among the Kurds by preparing Kurdish dictionaries and curricula targeting Southeastern Türkiye, he argued that Turkish leftist intellectuals opposing human rights sadly make them more reactionary than "supposedly reactionary Americans" (Anter, 1962, pp. 46-7).

Kırmızıtoprak's response to Anter shocked readers with its vituperative tone and content. He outlined Anter's arguments and followed them with personal attacks on Anter. He called Anter the Wheatbug poet using the language of wealthy landowners, exploitative bourgeois, and their hunting dogs." He further suggested that Anter consider the youth's criticisms of him instead of shielding himself with some immunity (Kırmızıtoprak, 1962, p. 13). Anter's response conveyed the depth of his distress. He articulated that he "read the inappropriate article with regret and sorrow, asserting that his only 'offense' was perceiving the American recommendations on Kurdish education as favorable. Furthermore, he expressed forgiveness towards Kırmızıtoprak and extended an apology to *Barış Dünyası* audience and staff on Kırmızıtoprak's behalf" (Anter, 1962b, pp. 46-7).

In his memoir, Anter noted that Başar was quite furious with Kırmızıtoprak's response and intended to take legal action against him; however, Anter stepped in and stopped this (Anter, 2010, p. 174).

Kırmızıtoprak opted not to pursue the debate due to Anter's paternalistic demeanor, although he continued to publish articles in *Yön*. In his biography of Kırmızıtoprak, Selahattin Ali Arik notes that although being an anti-Kemalist, Kırmızıtoprak underwent an ideological transformation after prison caused by his discomfort towards the DP. Amidst the discussion between the national democratic revolution and socialist revolution supporters in the Turkish leftist circle in the early 1960s, Kırmızıtoprak supported the former. He labeled the PRP as Kemalist and progressive and the DP as reactionary (Arik, 2011, pp. 36-7). Aside from whether Kırmızıtoprak's ideas or manner were right, his dispute with Anter marked the first public manifestation of the intellectual inquiries prevalent among the 49ers and their contest with the older generation's ideas.

2.4.2. A New Era of Kurdish Journalism: *Deng, Dicle-Fırat, Roja Newe* and the Trial of the 23ers in 1963

After their release from prison and inspired by the political climate after the 1960 coup, the 49ers engaged in activism, mainly literary. Musa Anter's bold claims over the Kurdish problem, published in *Barış Dünyası*, stirred up the political atmosphere. He took a step forward and decided to launch a bilingual magazine. His idea was welcomed by many 49'ers, including Şerefhanoğlu, Anter, Serhat, Kutlay, Acar, Çamlıbel, Budak, Yaşar Kaya, Sait Elçi, and Halis Yokuş. Other Kurdish intellectuals, such as Kemal Badıllı and Kemal Bingöllü, also supported the initiative. The magazine was *Deng*, which means "voice" in Kurdish (Kaya, 2017, pp. 57-8). *Deng* could survive only two issues in 1963 before Kaya was arrested, and the police confiscated the third issue while still in the printing house (Kutlay, 1990, p. 30). These issues were reprinted in Stockholm in 1998. Luckily, the third issue was discovered at the National Library during the research phase of this thesis.

However, Şerefhanoğlu and Sait Elçi broke away because of ideological disagreements during a meeting with the other 49ers before *Deng* was printed. They later announced the upcoming *Reya Rast* magazine, whose name means “the right-wing way” or “the true way” in Kurdish as a sign of its ideology (Arslan, 2020, p. 119). Even though the magazine was never published, both were arrested with their fellow 49ers in the same lawsuit. When Şerefhanoğlu was detained, authorities seized texts and documents intended to be published in *Reya Rast* from his home (Gürsel, 1977, p. 70).

In addition to *Deng*, two new journals emerged in the post-1960 Coup years that concentrated on the Kurdish issue. *Roja Newe* (The New Day) was the first Zazaki-Turkish newspaper published in May 1963 in Istanbul by Doğan Kılıç (Can, 2019, para. 2). It was planned to be published monthly. However, Turkish authorities banned the newspaper after its first issue. Hasan Buluş was the editor-in-chief. Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, owner of *İleri Yurt* and a 49er, was *Roja Newe*’s Diyarbakır representative, and Zülkif Karahan, 49er Ali Karahan’s relative, was in charge of the Siverek one (“Roja Newe”, 1963, p. 8).

Doğan Kılıç, the editor of *Roja Newe*, merits deeper attention and examination as a distinctive figure. He was born in Erzincan in 1927. His early life was shaped by the 1938 Dersim Massacre, a traumatic event in which his father, grandfather, uncle, and many other family members were killed. The remaining members of his family were exiled to Burdur. He left Türkiye for the United States at an early age, where he spent nine years and served in the U.S. Army. He returned to Türkiye in 1956, and he worked for the Istanbul Municipality's Information Department (Bulut, 2020, para. 12-15). His exposure to new ideas during his time abroad informed his intellectual and political activism. Kılıç was notably one of the first to attempt legal action regarding the atrocities of 1938, submitting complaints to Turkish authorities in 1957 and 1958 to hold accountable those responsible for the mass killings in Erzincan during the Dersim rebellion, but he failed (Bulak, 2023, para. 9). At the beginning of the 1960s, Kılıç expanded his intellectual pursuits into the literary and journalistic realms and published *Çin Edebiyatı Antolojisi* (Anthology of Chinese Literature), a translation he commissioned from English into Turkish (Şıhhasananlı, 1960, p. 4).

Dicle-Fırat was a Kurmanj-Turkish bilingual newspaper that aimed to highlight the Kurdish issue from a leftist perspective and survived for eight issues between October 1962 and May 1963. Edip Karahan was *Dicle-Fırat*'s owner and editor-in-chief. He was a young Kurdish journalist from Mardin and a TLP activist (S. Bulut, 2005, p. 13). He published articles in *Dicle-Fırat* written by many 49ers such as Anter, Kırmızıtoprak, Nazmi Balkaş, Yaşar Kaya, and Sait Elçi (Malmîsanij, 1997, p. 27). Aytekin was a renowned socialist activist and intellectual of the 1960s. He was from a wealthy family of Siirt Kurds. He belonged to Anter's generation in terms of age. Like Edip Karahan, he was a member of the TLP. He also wrote articles on the issue of assimilation in *Dicle-Fırat* under the pen name Ahmet Botanlı (Mert, 2013, p. 11).

Interior Minister Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata divides the 23ers into three groups: The first group was the 49ers and their affiliates, who continued "Kurdish nationalist activities" after 1959. The second group was those around Iraqi journalist Hemavandi, who entered Türkiye in 1963 and collaborated with some 49ers to establish a covert Kurdish nationalist organization. The third group was young Iraqi Kurdish students, who acted as liaisons between Kurdish groups in Europe and those in Türkiye ("Akşam", 29.06.1963, p. 7).. The young Kurdish students from outside of Türkiye and connected to the KSSE, including Ibrahim Mamhidir, Gazi Dizey, Nejat Remzi, Foad Derwish, Talat Sherif Muhtar, Said Abdurrahman, and Cemal Alemdar from Iraq, in addition to Firuz Felahat from Iran.

The first group was the Kurdish intellectuals from Türkiye, and the 49ers were the usual suspects since seven of them, Şerefhanoğlu, Anter, Bilgin, Serhat, Kakioğlu, Yaşar Kaya, and Said Elçi, met in prison again (Işık, 2024, p. 466). In addition to the 49ers, other Kurdish activists such as Ali Anagör, Edip Karahan, Ergün Koyuncu, Kemal Bingöllü, and Enver Aytekin were also part of this group. As mentioned above, Anagür's name appeared multiple times in the 49ers' court minutes. He was the head of the Tunceli Culture Association. He was a close friend of Dr. Şivan and on *Ceride-i Dersim*'s board along with him, as previously noted. The indictment in the 23ers Trial states that Anagür communicated with Nuri Dersimi, granted him and his wife honorary membership in the Tunceli Culture Association and invited them to its meeting (Bulak, 2021, para. 12). The

last group was *Roja Newe* board members and their affiliates, allegedly in contact with Mustafa Barzani and Nuri Dersimi. Those were Abdulsettar Hamavendi, Doğan Kılıç, and Hasan Buluş (Bulak, 2021, para. 8-10).

Abdulsettar Hamavendi, a controversial person in Kurdish politics, was a key inmate of the 23ers Trial. On the one hand, some sources depict him as a journalist, Kurdish intellectual, and friend of Mustafa Barzani, King Hussein of Jordan, and many Saudi royal members (H. Kaya, 2012, p. 97). On the other hand, many thought he might be working for an intelligence agency. For instance, Mümtaz Kotan, the founder of DDKO and son of 49er Emin Kotan, asserted that Hamavendi suggested some individuals become high-ranking politicians among DDKO cadres but failed to deliver on that because Kotan neither liked nor trusted him (Kotan, 2002, pp. 13-4). Hamavendi's alleged connections with the Barzani movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as with Kurdish intellectuals like Nuri Dersimi, made him the number one suspect of the trial. Hamavendi's secret discussions with Doğan Kılıç over possible Israeli aid to Kurdish activists in Türkiye and Hamavendi's alleged interactions with Israeli officials were instrumentalized in portraying a larger conspiracy against the integrity of the Turkish homeland, using this narrative to justify further suppression. Eventually, Turkish intelligence officers disguised as Israeli consular officials arrested Hamavendi and Kılıç (Anter, 2010, p. 186). Consequently, his photo with Mustafa Barzani was found during interrogation, which raised more concern among state authorities and was used as critical evidence later in the trial.

There was an apparent growth in national awareness among the young Kurds and their pursuit of an independent identity. The awareness first rose during their imprisonment between 1959 and 1961. Thanks to the new political atmosphere emerging after the 1960 coup, the journalistic efforts among the 49ers and some other Kurdish intellectuals thrived. Therefore, Bulak regards 1963 as the year of Kurdish enlightenment because of the boom in Kurdish-related journals in Türkiye led by the 49ers, while highlighting Kılıç and Karahan's fresh perspectives (Bulak, 2019, para 1). Shortly, although the 49ers appeared to be a seemingly random assortment of individuals, authorities focused on specific Kurdish youths, specifically Bulak's "enlighteners," in the 23ers' trial.

23ers were arrested on June 27, 1963. At that time, Yaşar Kaya was already in Sultanahmet Prison due to the *Deng* Case. The other detainees were taken to Balmumcu Military Prison. They were interrogated at the notorious Ziverbey Mansion. Unlike the trial of the 49ers, some of the prisoners this time faced torture during their interrogations. Thanks to the efforts of Serhat's lawyer wife, the families of the detainees were able to meet with İnönü, which helped put an end to the torture sessions (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 128-29). The prisoners were transferred to Ankara and incarcerated in Mamak Military Prison after interrogations. In protest of the poor conditions there, all the prisoners, except for Şerefhanoğlu, went on a hunger strike (Pêşeng, 2015, p. 130). Eventually, the prisoners were brought back to Istanbul for trial and relocated to Sultanahmet Prison. Nonetheless, the evidence indicated that the defendants were loosely connected as members of a Kurdish social circle and had no shared political agenda for establishing an independent Kurdistan. After approximately a year and a half of imprisonment, Hamavendi and Kılıç were sentenced to ten months in prison, while all the remaining Turkish citizen prisoners were acquitted. Additionally, Kurdish students who were outside of Türkiye were deported (Kaya, 2017, p. 84).

Right at the beginning of the trial of the 23ers, the state escalated the crackdown on Kurdish media. The government closed *Deng*, *Dicle-Fırat,* and *Roja Newe* immediately. These bilingual periodicals played a critical role in addressing issues faced by the Kurdish people publicly for the first time while emphasizing using the native language more than *İleri Yurt*. They also fostered the intellectual growth of the Kurdish community by publishing Kurdish-language articles and discussions. In this sense, the state's ban on these platforms aimed to silence a vital voice for the newly emerging Kurdish intellectual circles.

The 23ers exhibited a wider diversity in terms of social and cultural backgrounds and encompassed a wide array of Kurdish intellectuals and students compared to the 49ers. As mentioned, the accused included students from Southern Kurdistan affiliated with the KSSE and intellectuals involved in Kurdish media in Türkiye. Although these individuals, belonging to certain circles, knew each other as members of an intellectual kinship based on Kurdishness and did not belong to a broader organization, they were targeted by the

state to suppress a Kurdish resurgence. It is important to note that Mustafa Barzani's armed resistance in Iraq, as well as the Marxist anti-colonialist national liberation movements like those in Cuba in 1959 and Algeria in 1962, was popular among the Kurdish youth. At the same time, the TLP was also gaining support from both Kurdish and Turkish young leftists. In this manner, the Turkish state would achieve two objectives and reuse the narrative surrounding the "Kurdish-communist threat" invented in the trial of the 49ers.

To sum up, the trial of the 23ers is recognized as a crucial turning point in the state's targeting of Kurdish intellectuals and students. Even though the 1960 Coup created a milder political atmosphere, Kurds continued to face legal challenges amidst stringent state control, targeting mainly those in literary circles such as journalists Anter, Edip Karahan, Enver Aytekin, and many others. The trial emerged as the continuation of the 49ers since many were rearrested. Moreover, the trial highlighted existing political and ideological divisions among Kurdish intellectuals while showcasing how repressive state policies shaped the movement. The state's pressure and brutality on Kurdish intellectuals and students intensified in terms of methods and surveillance. The state accused Kurdish intellectuals and students of seeking state-building aspirations, attempting to criminalize their demands for recognition and identity while taking extreme and inhumane measures, such as physical torture. While some defendants were acquitted, others faced sentences.

2.4.3. TKDP and TLP–DDKO: Clear-Cut Ideological Division in the Kurdish Movement

Azat Zana Gündoğan and Ahmet Alış have conducted in-depth research on the TLP and its connections to the emerging Kurdish movement in the 1960s. Gündoğan provided a thorough analysis of the Eastern Meetings, while Alış examined the TLP's function as a safe harbor for the Easterners Group for DDKO and, to some extent, KDPinT. Building on the framework established by these studies, this section will focus on the role of the left-wing 49ers in influencing the TLP-DDKO relationship. Then, it will look at the right-wing 49ers closer to the Barzani movement and the founders of his party's section in

Türkiye, TKDP. Finally, TKDPinT, the left-wing split in TKDP led by Kırmızıtoprak, will be examined briefly.

The TLP was established in 1961 by a coalition of progressive trade unionists, such as Kemal Türkler, Kemal Süllker, and Rıza Kuas.[23] The party aimed become the "working class's voice" and promoted socialist principles. In 1962, TLP's collective leadership invited left-wing intellectuals like Behice Boran, Mehmet Ali Aybar, and Adnan Cemgil to join the party. In February 1962, Mehmet Ali Aybar became the party chair (Aydın & Taşkın, 2016, p. 85).

TLP's approach to the Kurdish issue was particularly noteworthy. First, TLP was the first legal political entity to recognize and championed Kurdish people's rights, and urged cultural and economic reforms to solve the systemic discrimination and underdevelopment the Eastern region suffered from (Çiçek, 2017, p. 11). Second, Mehmet Ali Aybar, an intellectual and legal scholar, was incredibly sympathetic to the Kurdish cause and thus liked by the Kurdish people. His leadership facilitated numerous aspiring Kurdish political intellectuals' involvement with the party, especially Canip Yıldırım and Tarık Ziya Ekinci, who opened TLP's branches across Kurdish towns (Miroğlu, 2010, pp. 159-60).

TLP emerged as a platform for marginalized groups after the introduction of the 1961 Constitution, as it expanded so many political rights. The party won 3% of the popular vote in the 1965 general elections and fourteen seats in the assembly thanks to the new electoral system called the National Remnant (Şener, 2015, p. 122). It was the first election in which a socialist party gained parliamentary representation in the Turkish parliament. Tarık Ziya Ekinci became the TLP deputy for Diyarbakır (Atılgan, 2019, p. 187).

The Easterner Group was composed primarily of Kurdish intellectuals, students, and activists drawn to TLP because of its progressive stance on minority rights and

[23] Interestingly, Ahmet Muşlu, the informant in the Trial of the 49ers, had infiltrated the TLP's founders list as a union leader. Nevertheless, following an article in the Oath (*Ant*) journal about his espionage activities, he was barred from the party (Sargın, 2001, p. 1193).

recognition of the Kurdish issue as a legitimate social and political problem. These individuals sought not only to address issues of class and economic inequality but also to bring attention to the unique struggles of the Kurdish people under the state's nationalist policies. Many group members were either 49ers or in their social and political cycle. For instance, Canip Yıldırım was the leader of the Easterner group. Many other 49ers, namely Musa Anter, Yaşar Kaya, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Naci Kutlay, Hasan Akkuş, Ziya Acar, Necati Siyahkan, Yusuf Kaçar, Mehmet Oğuz Üçok, and Yavuz Çamlıbel were well-known group members. Tarık Ziya Ekinci was from the Dicle Dorm Generation and was a close friend of Anter and Yıldırım. Kemal Burkay, Enver Aytekin, Edip Karahan, Mehmet Ali Aslan, and many other group members were close friends with many 49ers even before their imprisonment.

The Eastern Meetings organized by the Easterner Group had a striking effect in mobilizing the Kurds in the 1960s. The primary objective of the rally was to protest the socio-economic underdevelopment in Eastern Türkiye. "Easterner" activists aimed to raise awareness in terms of social injustices, lack of education, widespread poverty, and high unemployment rates. They asked the state to prioritize investments in economic and cultural initiatives in the East rather than military operations (Beşikçi, 2014, pp. 21-5). The First Eastern Meetings started in Silvan in August, followed by Diyarbakır and Siverek in September, Batman, Tunceli, and Ağrı in October, culminating in Ankara in November 1967. The Easterner group organized meetings independently, without consulting the TLP's leadership. Still, the TLP expressed solidarity with the events. Behice Boran attended the Silvan meeting, and Mehmet Ali Aybar participated in the Ağrı meeting, each delivering a speech (Burkay, 2001, p. 205). The Second Eastern Meetings took place in Diyarbakır in April, Hakkari in June, Suruç and Hilvan in July, Varto, Siverek, and Lice in August, and finally in Diyarbakır in September 1969 (Beltekin, 2024, p. 166-67). According to Şur, the TKDP had notable local influence during the first meeting, while the impact of both DDKO and Kırmızıoprak became more dominant in the second meeting (Şur, 2018a, p. 24).

Gündoğan underlines that both eastern meetings were primarily shaped by the leftist movement of the 1960s political atmosphere and points out two main groups involved:

the socialist Kurds within the TLP and the nationalists who founded the TKDP. For instance, despite being right-wing, Sait Elçi gave speeches at many Eastern meetings (Doğanoğlu, 2016, p. 949). Gündoğan says while both groups contributed, the socialists led the initiative under the TLP. The meetings enabled Kurds to express their specific concerns, distinct from the class-based politics of the Turkish left, while being the first mass protests in Republican Turkish history held by Kurdish masses (Gündoğan, 2005, pp. 1-2).

The TKDP was the first underground Kurdish party formed in the 1960s (Güneş, 2013, p. 111). It was founded by Derviş Akgül, Sait Elçi, Şerafettin Elçi, Şakir Epözdemir, and Ömer Turhan two years before the first wave of the Eastern meetings. At the inaugural assembly of the party, Sait Elçi was appointed as the leader, while Şerafettin Elçi took on the role of secretary, who were both 49ers. Since he was a well-known figure, Faik Bucak was persuaded to assume the leadership position within the party, which he maintained for five months until his assassination in 1965 (Alış, 2017, p. 94).

The party aimed to advocate for the Kurds' political, economic, and cultural rights in Türkiye and expressed that Kurds should be represented fairly and given regional autonomy. Moreover, they demanded the official recognition of the Kurdish language, a bilingual curriculum, a university named Kurdistan, freedom for Kurdish journals and broadcasts, and an economic development plan including the reinvestment of 75% of petroleum revenue in Kurdish cities (Temel, 2015, pp. 166-67). The party founders believed the Kurdish issue was more national than class-related (Alış, 2017, p. 94). In that sense, the party's political agenda was more in line with what Anter offered in *Barış Dünyası*.

Sait Elçi's charismatic leadership and renowned Barzani name rendered the TKDP a compelling political entity. Although TKDP's discourse dominated the first wave of Eastern meetings, the party was notably absent in grassroots presence and had no youth section (Çelik, 2021, p. 202). Ultimately, leftist groups, mainly the DDKO, occupied this critical space in the age of social movements spearheaded by university students worldwide. In addition, the entire TKDP central committee, except Şerafettin Elçi, was arrested in 1968 by Turkish intelligence (Arslan, 2019, p. 7). Central committee member

Şakir Epözdemir became the first Kurd to present a political defense to the court in Turkish republican history (Sadînî, 2020, para. 73-76). Although Epözdemir's defense successfully articulated Kurdish rights in the legal arena, the incident known as the TKDP Antalya Trial ultimately hastened the party's decline.

While the first leg of the Second Eastern Meetings was held in April 1969 in Diyarbakır, the DDKO was established in Ankara in May 1969, followed by a branch in Istanbul shortly after, operating under a unified charter despite being established separately. In 1970, a coalition of Kurdish youth and intellectuals from Silvan, Ergani, Kozluk, and Batman became members of the Diyarbakır branch altogether (Fırat, 1969, para. 10-11). In the organization's charter, their ideology represented a more straightforward expression of Kurdish nationalism from a Marxist perspective, such as the recognition of Kurdish identity, language rights, and the end of state brutality in Kurdish regions.

DDKO's foundation coincided with the rising radicalism among youth both in Türkiye and abroad in 1968. As Aybar was no longer the chair of the TLP, the party's ability to address Kurdish concerns diminished, inevitably prompting Kurdish activists to seek an independent affiliation (Gündoğan, 2005, p. 57). That's why DDKO emerged primarily from within the ranks of the Easterner Group. Notably, key 49ers, such as Naci Kutlay and Ziya Acar, and Hüseyin Oğuz Üçok, 49er affiliates like Emin Kotan, whose father was 49er Emin Kotan, were later arrested for being DDKO members. Other Easterner politicians, like Ümit Fırat, Mehdi Zana, and Tarık Ziya Ekinci, along with his brother Yusuf Ziya Ekinci, were also DDKO leaders. Furthermore, elder left-wing 49ers like Canip Yıldırım, Musa Anter, and Örfi Akkoyunlu mentored DDKO activists and kept in touch with them regularly. Eventually, Yıldırım and Anter were arrested because of the DDKO Trial after the 1971 Memorandum (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Dava Dosyası: 1*, 1975 p. 5).

In analyzing the DDKO and TLP processes, it is essential also to address Sait Kırmızıtoprak's influence. Due to his adherence to Marxist principles, Kırmızıtoprak cultivated strong relationships with Turkish leftists. Since he was close to the *Yön* group, the National Democratic Revolution thesis profoundly influenced his thoughts. Over

time, his perspectives changed sharply regarding colonialism and the necessity of anticolonial resistance for the Kurdish cause (Yadirgi, 2017, p. 37).

Kırmızıtoprak maintained an intrinsic connection with the Easterners Group within TLP and garnered substantial popularity among socialist Kurdish youth. Moreover, he took part in the Eastern Meetings along with his followers. However, he believed that the DDKO and TLP were not radical enough to solve the Kurdish problem. His shift resulted from his growing interest and inspiration from African and Asian guerrilla movements. Finally, he declared that armed struggle was indispensable (Arik, 2011, p. 291). This transformation also ushered his closer affiliation with the Barzani movement in the future.

Kırmızıtoprak continued to nurture relationships with his colleagues from the TKDP, with Alış recalling that he visited those undergoing trial in the TKDP Antalya Case (Alış, 2017, p. 96). Sait Elçi, who endured 13 months of detention and recognized his party's decline, expressed satisfaction with Kırmızıtoprak's renewed connection to the TKDP. Despite notable ideological divergences between Kırmızıtoprak and Sait Elçi, the former intensified his political alignment with the latter. Eventually, Kırmızıtoprak became the TKDP's central committee member, and Sait Elçi stayed in his position as the party leader (Şur, 2018b, p. 258). Committed to implementing armed struggle, Kırmızıtoprak, along with a cadre of comrades, including 49ers Nazmi Balkaş and Faik Savaş, crossed into Iraqi Kurdistan and adopted the nom de guerre Dr. Şivan. Thus, the KDPinT, like DDKO and TKDP, emerged within the 49ers.

CONCLUSION

Ottoman–Kurdish relations were a pragmatic alliance throughout history. After Selim I's eastward conquest, Sunni Kurdish *mirs* accepted vassal status to counter Shiite Safavid influence. They enjoyed broad autonomy for three centuries, but Mahmud II's centralization policy threatened local rule and sparked a series of uprisings led by many Kurdish notables to protect their privileges. The state's inability to replace abolished intermediaries empowered religious notables in the long term. After the 1908 Revolution, the demand for autonomy became popular among the Kurdish elite, but Turkification policies and WWI radicalized their visions. After WWI, the SRK pursued Wilsonian independence (Ozoglu, 2012, pp. 71-82). Yet Ankara's victory ushered in systematic repression of Kurdish political expression.

Ankara government promised an autonomous Kurdistan in the 1921 Constitution, yet the 1924 Constitution centralized power and erased non-Turkish rights (Hür, 2013, pp. 274-75). In response, the *Azadî* organization started a major revolt in 1925 under Sheikh Said's leadership, which blended Islamic symbolism with nationalist aims. Following the defeat, the Ankara government enacted the Law for the Maintenance of Order, set up tribunals, and issued the 1925 Eastern Reform Plan that included mass internal exiles, a ban on the Kurdish language, and Inspector-General rule (Bayrak, 2013, pp. 35-40). Kurdish intellectuals in exile formed *Hoybun* (1927) and led the Ağrı Uprising (1929-30), which ended with brutal state counterinsurgency and a series of massacres (Bruinessen, 2013, p. 430). Meanwhile, Ankara advanced assimilation policies via the Turkish History/Language Theses, especially in the 1930s. The genocidal campaign in Dersim between 1938 and 1938, framed as "a civilizing mission" was the final nail in the Kurds' coffin. 1938 marked the beginning of the "Kurdish interregnum" era until the 49ers (Arslan, 2020, p. 61).

Domestically, the Kemalist state's education drive unintentionally created a cohort of Kurdish university students in Istanbul and Ankara. Kurdish intellectuals Yusuf Azizoğlu and Remzi Bucak founded the Tigris Student Dormitory in 1939 to shield them from

assimilation and meet basic housing needs. Musa Anter was the dorm's manager. The dorm became a center for informal debates, cultural events, and exposure to illegal journals, such as Cry, which nurtured ethnic consciousness among youngsters. The Soviet-backed Mahabad Republic in Iranian Kurdistan thrilled dorm residents. The establishment of an independent Kurdish state encouraged them to engage in debates on Türkiye's tentative democratization. They campaigned for opposition parties, intertwining Kurdish grievances with emerging multi-party politics (Ekinci, 2013, pp. 153-68).

In 1950, the DP dismantled the harsh single-party measures that had alienated Kurds. Repeal of the Settlement Law's "forbidden zones" and mass-relocation articles let thousands of Kurds return to their hometowns (Eroğul, 2014, pp. 42-3). Exiled graduates and local elites filled DP lists: Canip Yıldırım and Edip Altınakar ran the Diyarbakır branch; Yusuf Azizoğlu and Remzi Bucak won seats; Ağrı Rebellion's leader Halis Öztürk entered the parliament (Miroğlu, 2010, p. 121). Riding this coalition, the DP captured Kurdish provinces decisively in the 1950 (55 % nationwide) and 1954 elections (58.5 % nationwide). Simultaneously, the DP unleashed an eastward development surge: a new railway between Muş and Kars, highways between Urfa and Mardin, and Midyat and Cizre, an Erzincan textile mill, subsidized fertilizer, and easy credit for tractors. Truck ownership in Diyarbakır multiplied tenfold (Nergiz 2019, pp. 69-88). Aghas those aligned with the DP transformed into a Kurdish bourgeoisie and accelerated rural-urban migration.

Yet, rising Menderes' authoritarianism after 1954 triggered an internal dispute in the DP. Twenty deputies, including Mustafa Ekinci founded the LP in 1955. The LP rapidly attracted the new Kurdish intelligentsia, and its birth revealed generational cleavage inside Kurdish politics. A "Second Young Kurd" cohort, urban, republic-educated, born after 1915, sought institutional liberalization (Ekinci, 2013, 273-274). In the 1957 election, the LP captured roughly 20 % in Diyarbakır but failed to win a seat. This fragmentation foreshadowed the post-1959 split between Kurds pursuing influence in Turkish establishment parties and those demanding alternative platforms.

The real watershed came in 1958 when Musa Anter and Canip Yıldırım assumed editorship of *İleri Yurt*. The four-page newspaper shattered the linguistic taboo that had reigned since Dersim by publishing Kurdish phrases and even entire interviews in Kurmanji or Zazaki. Its popularity spread across the east and into Istanbul's dorms; students read copies enthusiastically. The newspaper triggered near-daily prosecutions; courtrooms in Diyarbakır turned into improvised rallies as lawyers traveled from Kars and Istanbul to defend Anter. Kurdish and left-Turkish students at Ankara and Istanbul faculties organized panels supporting the paper (Anter, 2010, p. 138-42).

The Menderes government closed the Tigris Student Dorm in 1955, but Kurdish students founded cultural clubs to preserve solidarity. For instance, law student Nurettin Yılmaz was a member of Cizre Association along with Şerafettin Elçi; Naci Kutlay was quite active in the Ağrı Student Association. These clubs channeled *İleri Yurt*'s discourse and incubated a republic-educated "Second Young Kurd" generation—urban, fearless, and more secular than their predecessors—who would later dominate the 49ers trial.

The most vibrant club, the Tunceli Cultural Association, gathered students from Dersim, including massacre survivor children such as 49er Sait Kırmızıtoprak. Its satirical newsletter, *Ceride-i Dersim*, mixed politics with humor. Columns mocked inflationary parliamentary candidacies and sprinkled Zazaki words, offering young readers "weapons of the weak."

By 1959, a culturally assertive, networked youth in hometown associations, armed with mock-satirical journals had replaced deferential DP loyalism. The heavy repression of their Kurdishness and subsequent arrest would soon radicalize strands of the movement, setting the stage for the group 49ers, and ideological factionalism rose in the 1960s.

Meanwhile, the late 1950s emerged amidst anti-colonial turmoil that reshaped political and ideological limits, indirectly influencing Kurdish intellectuals. In Asia and Africa, newly mobilized elites invoked the language of Bandung, Dien Bien Phu, and the Algerian movement, presenting self-determination as a universal entitlement and socialism as the preferred engine of decolonization. For Kurdish students, usually marginal to mainstream Turkish debate, these events supplied both a moral precedent and a ready-made lexicon: imperialism, national liberation, and popular front etc. The WFDY

and the IUS, headquartered in Prague and Vienna, became a hub where Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian Kurds could meet other students from the colonized countries. At the same time, Middle Eastern governments were dispatching unprecedented numbers of scholarship holders to Eastern Bloc universities, while veteran émigrés such as Kamuran Bedirhan transformed Paris into a Kurdish cultural capital; these vectors converged to create the first genuinely transnational Kurdish student network. From this ferment, the KSSE was founded in Wiesbaden in 1956. By 1958, the society claimed one hundred members across Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Britain and opened an American branch in Chicago. (Gorgas, 2021, p. 170-75). Such a surge eventually encouraged Iraqi and Iranian scholarship holders in Türkiye to form an underground affiliate.

Meanwhile, General Abd al-Karim Qasim's coup toppled the Hashemite monarchy and invited Mustafa Barzani to return from a decade-long Soviet exile (Rubin, 2007, p. 359). Qasim's provisional constitution named Kurds and Arabs as co-founders of the Iraqi Republic; the new flag carried a yellow sun borrowed from the Kurdish banner, and the regime signaled that autonomy was negotiable (Natali, 2005, p. 49). *Kurdistan* hailed the revolution as proof that "Arab patriotism and Kurdish liberation are one struggle."

The emerging symbolism was inspiring for Kurdish students in Türkiye. They had grown up under a Kemalist taboo that reduced the word "Kurd" to a violation of national security; here was a neighboring state that engraved Kurds' rights in its constitution. The common denominator of these excited youngsters was a new, republic-educated cohort, born after 1930, fluent in Turkish, many with college degrees, who embraced their Kurdish identity on a social basis.

Turkish authorities, meanwhile, molded Barzani's Moscow years, KSSE congresses, and Radio Yerevan's Kurdish broadcasts into a single narrative of "Kurdish-communist conspiracy." Diplomatic cables to London pleaded for the surveillance of KSSE members (Ross, 1959, p. 2). At the same time, claims that the Kremlin had undermined Baghdad's national integrity had been circulated in the Turkish media. By early 1959, the Menderes government moved from paranoia to policing. Türkiye's securitized response converted intellectual curiosity into hostile politics. Incarcerations later created a generation of Kurdish activists in the 1960s who believed that Ankara had effectively condemned itself

by equating cultural demands with communism. This conviction galvanized Kurdish activism for decades to come.

Throughout 1959, a string of seemingly disconnected incidents inside Türkiye and just across its southern frontier converged to transform scattered Kurdish discontent into an identifiable and prosecutable opposition when Colonel Abdul-Wahab al-Shawwaf's coup in Mosul collapsed in March (Hunt, 2005, p. 80). A month later, Colonel Mustafa Dabak's revolt in Kirkuk met the same fate (Kızılyaprak, 2005, p. 183). Kurdish peshmergas, who fought alongside Iraqi communists in suppressing the mutineers, became hit news in Ankara. Turkish newspapers published articles on Turkmen massacres and armed Kurdish returnees ("Akşam", 12.04.1959, p. 5).

General-turned-deputy Asım Eren, a staunch nationalist and member of the PRP, spoke in parliament on April 7 to question what "retaliatory measures" the government would consider against the "communist-directed Kurds controlled by Barzani." He suggested that retribution might also be necessary within Türkiye. To young Kurdish students in Istanbul and Ankara, his remarks felt like a call for violence. Gathering in lawyer Ziya Şerefhanoğlu's office, they wrote a telegram accusing Eren of using racist and dehumanizing remarks; 102 signatures were sent to the major newspapers ("Vatan", 13.04.1959, p.1). Eren fired back and branded them "Moscow's servants," and *Akşam* (15.04.1959) headlined: "102 University Students Claim to Be Kurdists (p.1)." A ban on "Kurdism-related news" followed, yet the incident had already connected previously isolated undergraduates and alerted police to their names.

The second flash point emerged from Diyarbakır. Cheap wheat seed coated with fungicide, nicknamed wheat-bug by locals, had poisoned thousands, disfiguring children with photosensitive lesions. Journalist-poet Musa Anter, already notorious for dropping Kurdish words into his *İleri Yurt* columns, traveled from village to village and published a satirical Kurdish poem in which a peasant girl pleads for salvation from both poison and poverty (Anter, 2010b, p. 141). The piece was no harsher than his earlier work, yet national papers claimed that Anter's "savior brothers" mentioned in the poem were indeed a coded call to arms. Court summonses multiplied. Hoped to turn the legal problem to an advantage, lawyer Edip Altınakar encouraged students to show solidarity with Anter.

They met at Atatürk Forest Farm and sent a second telegram defending Anter, Yıldırım, and Dolak (Kaya, 2012, pp. 79-81). Many names on that telegram list such as Nurettin Yılmaz, Naci Kutlay, Haydar Aksu, would soon become 49ers. While the provincial press debated the morality of printing Kurdish, the national security establishment folded the wheat-bug poem, the telegrams, and the Iraqi turbulence into a single narrative of Kurdish-communist conspiracy. Ankara banned the import of photographs showing scenes from the riots in Kirkuk. The government feared that Kurdish identity, once articulated, would inevitably couple with foreign subversion. The interior ministry stepped up surveillance. Social contacts among Kurdish students were inflated into evidence of an underground cell inside Türkiye (Kaya, 2005, pp. 105-6).

Most of these persecuted Kurds were born after the massacres in 1925, 1930, and 1938. Unlike their older relatives, they had not experienced collective punishment before. By November, security reports began to label these students, who were mostly from middle-class families, as part of a larger conspiracy. This set the stage for the mass arrests in December, which was known as the trial of the 49ers.

What started as political posturing, sensational news stories, and a poem about bad wheat developed into a state narrative that could justify emergency courts and death sentences within eight months. Internal conflicts did not just mirror the global trend of decolonization and Barzani's return; they gave Ankara specific reasons and evidence to turn its distant worries into a local show trial. Now, Kurdish cultural expression at home was seen as a threat to the state's existence.

The decision to neutralize Türkiye's nascent Kurdish intelligentsia was taken in the summer of 1959. Two confidential memoranda delivered on 31 July by senior police officials Ergun Gökdeniz and Ziya Selışık mapped the strategy: arrests must be framed as an anti-communist operation, handled in secret to forestall parliamentary debate, and public opinion would be managed with the slogan "Kurdish youth puppeted by Moscow" ("Yön", 25.09.1964, p. 4). President Celâl Bayar reportedly demanded a still harsher option—mass extermination or internment of up to five thousand Kurds, but Foreign Minister Zorlu warned of an international scandal; they agreed on authorizing the

National Security Service to seize “the most suspicious” forty or fifty figures (Fırat, 1996, pp. 71-2).

Those suspects, detained on 17 December, were a mixed group: law students who had signed telegram protests, lawyers, medical interns, a livestock trader from Malatya, an Alevi-Kurdish laborer whose sole offense was sending an admiring letter to *İleri Yurt*. The only denominator was their Kurdish identity. Arrests were staggered to avoid publicity: Musa Anter was arrested in Diyarbakır, Nurettin Yılmaz in Mardin, and Yavuz Çamlıbel while serving in the military in Kars. The press, still reeling from the “Pulliam affair” that had closed *Vatan* two days earlier, followed the ban on Kurdism-related news promulgated in April, and printed no news. A CIA bulletin nevertheless noted that the detainees were “young university students” and that Ankara intended to portray the affair as a plot directed from abroad (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA-RDP79T00975A004800430001-1, 21.12.1959, p. 1).

Meanwhile, Harbiye barracks turned into primitive isolation wards. The prison conditions were gruesome. Mehmet Emin Batu died of gastrointestinal bleeding, after which the file thinned to the iconic “49” (Gümgüm, 2022, 185).

Prosecutors alleged a clandestine Kurdish Independence Party run from Ankara, picnics disguised as secret congresses, funds raised for guerrilla war yet traced to a dead student’s funeral expenses. Poems addressed to Algerian fighter Djamila Bouhired were evidence of “racial agitation”; a single *Newsweek* article on Kurdish radio, a Barzani photograph inscribed “to my nephew,” attendance at an Iraqi consulate reception, possession of *Kurdistan* magazine, all knitted into an indictment demanding death sentences for separatism and espionage (Temel, 2015, pp. 77-91).

The 27 May coup altered the context without freeing the prisoners. Political detainees of all stripes were released, yet the 49ers were relocated to Soğukkuyu Military Prison in Ankara and informed that prosecutors still sought capital punishment.

Gradually, the case unraveled. By late 1961, defendants were released; those eventually sentenced in 1967 received terms shorter than their pre-trial detention and served them under a loose regime of compulsory residence. Yet the episode reset the coordinates of

Kurdish politics. Formerly apolitical students emerged convinced that constitutional channels were illusory; a younger tier, who had regarded telegram protests as daring, now contemplated clandestine parties. The state, for its part, had discovered the flexibility of "communist-Kurdist conspiracy" as a template it would reuse from the 1960s through the 1990s.

The 49ers didn't just create a movement; they helped shape one, which Bozarslan describes as a social group that some members formed into a conscious team in time (Bozarslan, 2013, p. 128). Their prison seminar offered the language, personal connections, and sense of moral obligation that later enabled opposing groups to work together on joint political efforts or shared cultural memorials. The men labeled by the prosecution as "Kurdish communist agitators" actually came from various Kurdish social backgrounds and played a key role in changing traditional leadership into modern politics. Hamit Bozarslan's study shows this clearly: one-third of the forty-nine men were born between 1897 and 1928, two-thirds between 1930 and 1938, and forty had university degrees. About half of them came from middle or lower-class families, unlike the previous tribal elites' regime (Bozarslan, 2013, pp. 131-32). All these different people had experienced state repression collectively. The irony was that first, the state denied their identity and then punished them for socializing around it. Being in prison deepened their understanding of the Kurdish problem and led many of them to alternative ideas. When they came together in Harbiye cells, they reflected the arguments later became future Kurdish organizations' tenets: older conservatives like Ziya Şerefhanoğlu and Ali Karahan, who valued tribal traditions and the continuation of the Kurdish social status-quo, opposed the equal nationalism rising in post-WWII world promoted by Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım. Some believed in constitutional reform and a focus on development, as Musa Anter wrote in *Barış Dünyası*. Others, like Sait Kırmızıtoprak, thought that class exploitation and national oppression were linked and that an anti-colonial struggle was necessary.

Once released, their first instinct was to test how far that new consciousness could travel in the looser political atmosphere following the 1960 coup. They began the publish journals such as *Deng, Dicle-Fırat,* and *Roja Newe* (Bulak, 2019, para 1). Print culture

both reflected and sped up the division. Starting in 1963 with Yaşar Kaya and Anter's guidance, *Deng* combined Kurdish and Turkish content and demanded constitutional recognition of Kurds' language rights. *Dicle-Fırat,* edited by Edip Karahan, provided a tougher coverage of strikes, land seizures, and police violence. *Roja Newe*, the first magazine in Zazaki, took language reclamation to the next level. The state shut down all three publications within a year. Police reports grouped these papers with foreign subversive links; in June 1963, the resulting sweep, known as the Trial of the 23ers, led to the re-arrest of seven 49ers, Iraqi student activists, and an Iraqi Kurdish journalist, Abdulsettar Hamavendi. General Cevdet Sunay wrote the indictment, demanding death sentences based on the idea that Israeli and Soviet agents were plotting a joint "Kurdish-communist conspiracy" (Göktaş, 1991, p. 72). By the time most were acquitted in 1964, it was clear: legal journalism alone couldn't achieve Kurdish rights. Therefore, they had to participate more in revolutionary politics.

However, the right and left labels were not yet crystal clear. Ruşen Aslan says that prison debates were the beginning of two main currents that emerged after 1965. The first was the socialist group in the TLP and DDKO. The second was the nationalists, who founded the secret TKDP (Çelik, 2021, pp. 201-2). Yıldırım, Kutlay, Çamlıbel, and many others who all joined the TLP's "Easterners" faction and later worked in DDKO branches. Şerafettin Elçi, Mehmet Ali Dinler, and Sait Elçi led the TKDP's leadership. Sait Kırmızıtoprak and Nazmi Balkaş's escape to Iraqi Kurdistan and split from TKDP helped create KDPinT, which later led to even stronger militancy.

In 1965, Mehmet Ali Aybar invited left-wing Kurdish activists to the TLP, and the party sent fourteen deputies to Ankara, including Tarık Ziya Ekinci from Diyarbakır. Inside TLP, the *Easterners* group worked for the recognition of ethnocultural oppression, alongside class exploitation (Güneş, 2013, p. 98). Their political activities peaked in the Eastern Rallies held from 1967 onward in Silvan, Diyarbakır, Tunceli, Ağrı, and Ankara. Kurdish activists demanded official bilingual education, an oil-revenue development fund for the southeast, and an amnesty for language offenses (Beşikçi, 2014, pp. 21-5).

The other became the secret TKDP, which aligned with Barzani's peshmerga. Contrary to the Easterners, they emphasized national identity over class. Even though the 1971

Military Memorandum and the following mass arrests cut both movements short, they left a profound mark. The TLP contributed to the DDKO, the first mass student group to call itself “Kurdish and socialist.” The pro-Barzani group led to the TKDP and the KDPinT, a splinter group led by Şivan that promoted guerrilla warfare (Kaynar, 2020, pp. 588-89). Although the 49ers and the following literary activities took place for a short period of time, almost every later political movement in Kurdish politics in Türkiye, nationalist or Marxist, traces its genealogy to these marking years.

By the mid-1970s, some wore lapel pins from parliament while others followed more militant paths; yet, they all referred to the trial of the 49ers as the turning point when Kurdish identity shifted from a feeling passed down through generations to a clear political agenda.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. ***I. Communist Bloc: USSR to Repatriate Kurds to Iraq*** **(CIA-RDP79T00975A004400040001-8). (1959, March 18). Central Intelligence Bulletin; Central Intelligence Agency**

25X1

Approved For Release 2002/09/04 : CIA-RDP79T00975A004400040001-8

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

USSR to Repatriate Kurds to Iraq 25X1

Plans now being worked out by Soviet and Iraqi officials to return 500 Kurds to Iraq from the USSR are "well along," 25X1
25X1 Of this number, about 100 were said to be located in the Moscow area, with the remainder around Tashkent.

These Kurds are almost certainly from among those who fled to the USSR following the suppression of the short-lived Kurdish People's Republic which was established with Soviet encouragement in northwestern Iran in late 1945. Individual Kurds, such as Mullah Mustafa Barzani--military leader during the 1945 uprising--have returned to Iraq since Qasim's coup, but this would be the largest group of returnees to date. Soviet authorities can be expected to make an effort to include among the returnees agents and Communist sympathizers.

Kurdish responsiveness to bloc and local Communist agitation for an independent state constitutes a potentially useful Soviet instrument for exerting pressure on the countries in which the Kurds reside. However, both Moscow and the Iraqi Communists at present are playing down the theme of an independent Kurdish state in favor of joint Kurdish-Arab support for the "progressive" Qasim regime, probably because of the disruptive effect such subversive activity would have on a pro-bloc Iraq. Furthermore, Mullah Mustafa apparently is satisfied, as are many Kurds, with Qasim's treatment of the Kurdish minority. 25X1

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2002/09/04 : CIA-RDP79T00975A004400040001-8

Appendix B. Collection of Information on Kurdish Situation (CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010090-9). (1959, April 21). Central Intelligence Agency

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Approved For Release 2006/11/13 : CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010090-9

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21 April 1959

Collection of Information on KURDISH SITUATION

PROBLEM

To determine scope and significance of Soviet/Iraqi activities respecting Kurds.

BACKGROUND

Return of Barzani; CPI activity re Iraqi Kurds; reported posting of returned Kurds to Irbil, on access road to Mahabad (center of 1945 "Kurdish Republic"); unconfirmed reports of Soviet smuggling of arms into Iran, near Maku and Julfa; unconfirmed report of unusual number Iraqi Kurds in Mahabad, allegedly in connection arms smuggling from Iraq; Soviet pro-Kurdish propaganda campaign; vitriolic Soviet anti-Iran campaign; etc.

DISCUSSION

These and related activities are considered possible forerunner of eventual Soviet move to consolidate its position in Middle East. Specifically, Soviets may be paving way for creation of cadre of pro-Soviet Kurds in northeastern Iraq - northern Iran as preliminary line of action looking to establishment of a "Kurdish Republic". This entity, if established, would almost certainly be used to facilitate LOC to Iraq, thus providing Soviets with direct means of access/control over a prospective satellite.

The matter of "Kurdistan" immediately calls up critical questions on timing of Soviet actions re consolidation of Iraq. Early Soviet control of the Iranian land bridge does not appear feasible. While consolidation of Iraq is a possibility, definitive action, of a fait accompli nature, prior to the emergence of clear indications as to outcome of the Summit, would not appear acceptable to the USSR, on three counts: (1) action in an area so affected with vital UK national interests would most likely harden the UK Summit attitude, if it did not actually touch off British military action; (2) forthright Turkish, Iranian, and US reaction would probably be provoked; and (3) Nasser's anti-communist campaign would be assisted, with possible repercussions in Iraq itself.

One possible Soviet course of action is: to hold the threat to Iraq over British heads at the Summit, while keeping decisive action in reserve as a hedge against a Summit-gone-sour; to proceed meanwhile with organization of Kurds, coupled with other pressures against Tehran, in an attempt to secure the land bridge or, preferably, to bring about a new and more "pliant regime" in Iran which would provide the necessary guarantees re this land bridge.

RECOMMENDATION

Highest priority inter-agency collection effort be mounted soonest to determine source, scope, and rate of Kurdish build-up in and around northern Iraq and Iran; reactions in Tehran, particularly of military and politicians; Turkish attitude; Kurdish factions, leaders; etc.

Approved For Release 2006/11/13 : CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010090-9

SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED
NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

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Appendix C. ***Fifth World Student Congress, Peking, China, 4-13 September 1958*** **(CIA-RDP78-00915R000900200013-6). (1958, August 21). Central Intelligence Agency.**

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP78-00915R000900200013-6

[redacted]T 25X1A2g

VIA Air

[redacted]

DATE 21 AUG 1958

25X1A6a

TO: [redacted]

FROM: Chief, FE 25X1C10b

General - [redacted]

SUBJECT: Specific --Fifth World Student Congress, Peking, China, 4-13 September 1958

ACTION REQUIRED: See paragraphs III, IV and V, below.

I. BACKGROUND

A. The communist controlled International Union of Students (IUS) with headquarters in Prague, Czechoslovakia, is sponsoring its fifth world congress in Peking, China from 4 to 13 September 1958. The fourth Congress was held in Prague in August 1956 and, according to IUS accounts, was attended by 650 students from 65 countries, including 189 observers from non-member organizations in 22 countries. These figures undoubtedly are inflated, due to the existence of numerous paper organizations and local fronts on IUS membership roles. In reality about 80 percent of IUS membership is from the Orbit. It is expected that attendance at the Peking Congress will be about the same number or slightly larger. However, this is not certain. A recent report from IUS sources suggests that the cost of travel to Peking from many areas of the world will tend to reduce attendance. As in the past, the IUS has invited non-member organizations to attend. Some of these, such as the British National Union of Students, customarily send observers to IUS Congresses basically in order to prepare material attacking the IUS, while refusing to affiliate with the IUS and maintaining allegiance to the non-communist International Student Conference (ISC) and its secretariat, COSEC. Their attendance at the Peking Congress, therefore, should not be considered abnormal or a major gain for the IUS. Other national unions are affiliated both with the IUS and COSEC not only as a measure of "neutrality," but in order to gain maximum international recognition and support for their internal problems. IUS affiliation ranges from "associate" membership, as in the case of Tunesia, to full membership as in the case of Morocco. Beyond this standard but critical non-communist attendance, it can be expected that some representative Asian student groups, who do not customarily attend IUS meetings and who are members of COSEC but not of IUS, may attend in an observer capacity, because of the influence of China in Asian affairs today and because of the opportunity offered by the All China Students Federation of a two to three week tour of China after the Congress. Such groups are unlikely to affiliate with the IUS, but their attendance will be of assistance to IUS propaganda objectives.

B. Following is the tentative agenda for the Congress as announced by the IUS:

1. Development of the international student movement, and the contribution of the IUS and student organizations to the defense of the interests of students and the promotion of international student cooperation.

2. Report of the Executive Committee of the IUS: Work of the following Commissions:

a. Role of students in the maintenance of peace

b. Activities of students against colonialism, and the participation of students of newly independent countries in national construction and the elimination of the legacies of colonialism.

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governments strongly resisted efforts of IUS organizers to enter their territory or propagandize in it with publications and, c: Local party apparati in England and France were able to assist in indoctrination, spotting and recruiting of young Africans temporarily estranged from their own cultures and not particularly well received by general British or French society. Thus IUS influence has been strong in such groups as the West African Students Union (WASU), in England, and the Federation des Etudiants Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), in France. The predominant IUS theme toward Africans has been one of anti-colonialism and racial equality with overtones of propaganda against non-communist "whites". In the meantime, the development of institutions of higher education within African countries has also led to the formation of indigenous student organizations which, by and large, have affiliated themselves to COSEC, and not to the IUS. Moreover, these indigenous groups in many cases have strongly resented the role WASU and FEANF have taken in representing them within the IUS. With the coming of independence to a number of African countries, direct IUS activity and material assistance to target groups from this area have increased, but with little success generally. The IUS has made progress recently in the Suda, which it is using to some degree as a base of operations against the rest of Africa, and its affiliates include the Tunisian, Moroccan and Algerian organizations which are also COSEC affiliated. The IUS position in Africa, south of the Sahara, however, remains very weak and it is not expected that student delegates from indigenous organizations in this area will attend the Peking Congress in any number.

3. Middle East. In line with general communist policy, the IUS takes a generally pro-Arab position, though its invective is directed more at the "western imperialists", whom the IUS charges with continued exploitation of the area, than at Israel. An Israeli group has maintained an associate membership in the IUS, for reasons related to concern for the Jewish minority within the Soviet Union; they see the IUS as a channel to this minority, though it has not proved so in practice. The IUS has been hampered in its Middle Eastern activities by the relative absence of nationally representative student organizations and the hostile attitude of a number of governments. There is no question, however, that the current Middle Eastern situation will have potential for the IUS and that it will be a major propaganda theme at the Peking Congress. The IUS has for some time published an Arabic edition of the World Student News, and at the last IUS Executive meeting in Leipzig in January 1958, the Arab delegates requested that more material appear in Arabic. Cheng Chi-ming, Chinese IUS secretary and head of the IUS Education, Culture and Travel Department, and Sadek Babek, Iranian IUS secretary and head of the IUS Colonial Bureau, attended the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference of December 1957 in Cairo, as IUS observers. There are indications that IUS and the communist youth front, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), intend to use the Solidarity Conference permanent secretariat in Cairo to extend their own influence in the Afro-Asian area. In fact, the Afro-Asian Youth and Student Conference, scheduled for Cairo in February 1959 under the secretariat's sponsorship, obviously has heavy IUS and WFDY backing.

4. Asia. Despite concentrated effort in Asia, the IUS has yet to make a significant impact in most Asian countries. Its members in the area from non-communist countries include only the representative Zengakuren of Japan, which is closely tied to the JCP and splinter groups in Burma and India. The Indonesian student movement withdrew from IUS membership several years ago, and has continued to weaken any remaining informal ties to the IUS, while becoming at the same time a full participant in COSEC. The most ambitious IUS effort in Asia in recent years was its attempt to take over the Afro-Asian Student Conference held in Bandung in May-June 1956. This attempt failed, and the IUS was generally discredited among non-communists in the area for its role in the meeting. This has not prevented the IUS however from publicizing the results of this Conference in an effort to associate itself with this important event.

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Appendix D. ***The Kurdish Problem*** **(CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010091-8). (1959, April 8). General CIA Records.**

Approved For Release 2006/10/31 : CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010091-8

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

8 April 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: The Kurdish Problem

1. In view of recent increased interest in the Kurds as a potentially troublesome element in the Middle East, O/NE on 2 April convened a meeting of Kurdish specialists from OCI, DDP, State, and the services to discuss the problem. Although no attempt was made to reach formal conclusions, there appeared to be general agreement on most key issues.

2. The principal substantive points made at the meeting are summarized below for your information:

a. There is little likelihood of the establishment of an independent Kurdistan.* Despite continuing efforts by exile groups

* The Kurds are the predominant element of the population in an area embracing southeast Turkey, northwest Iran, and northeast Iraq. Some Kurds are also found in northeast Syria and in the USSR. Although reliable population estimates are lacking, the Kurds of the area are estimated to number over 3 million, divided roughly as follows: Turkey: 1½ million; Iran: 500,000; Iraq: 800,000; Syria: 250,000; USSR: 100,000 (Soviet Armenia).

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and some of the younger urbanized elements in Iraq to stir up Kurdish nationalist feeling, the Kurds have never been politically united and they lack any real sense of nationhood. Such ethnic, linguistic, and religious cohesiveness as does distinguish them will probably continue to be outweighed by inherent inhibiting factors - narrow and often divisive tribal and sub-tribal loyalties, varying degrees of identification with the states in which they live, and widespread indifference as to who controls the political machinery so long as the individual's tribe is left alone. Over time, the Kurdish martial tradition and the cause of Kurdish separatism are likely to be further weakened by detribalization, settlement, and related social change.

b. Nevertheless, the Kurds will continue to have considerable nuisance value as rebels - or potential rebels - at least for some years to come. As a traditionally warlike and still largely nomadic or semi-nomadic people who occupy relatively remote areas and have a long history of bad blood with the authorities of their host countries, the Kurds could fairly readily be aroused if

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given arms and funds from outside. Even in the absence of an acknowledged over-all leader, enough tribes might be stirred up to make considerable trouble for a weak host country, especially if it had other security problems to contend with at the same time.

c. The security problem posed by the Kurds is minimal in Turkey, where the government and army have long exercised firm control and have had some success in encouraging assimilation. In Syria the relatively small Kurdish minority has been settled for years and offers little trouble to the government. It thus has little special potential as a vehicle for Iraqi subversion against the UAR.

d. However, the situation is different in Iran, where the government's policy is one of general neglect punctuated by fine promises on the one hand and efforts to repress the Kurds and put them in their place on the other. At the same time, the government in Tehran exercises only limited effective authority over its Kurdish areas. Although there is presently wide-spread acceptance of the

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status quo and even some genuine loyalty to the crown among Iranian Kurds, they might cause a serious diversion of Iranian internal security resources if sufficiently aroused.

e. Iraq is currently the most active scene of developments affecting the Kurds, who comprise some 20% of the population. The Qassim government has sought to play down traditional Arab-Kurdish animosities by well-publicised appointments of Kurds to high government posts, by welcoming the return of Mulla Mustapha and his followers from exile in the USSR*, by proclaiming Iraq a republic of Arabs and Kurds, and by broadcasting extensively in Kurdish. Especially if the Communists continue their effective drive toward power in Iraq, the Iraqi Kurds will give them a significant weapon against Iran. At the same time, however, Kurdish-Arab animosities will continue to present problems of control to any Iraqi government.

f. The USSR has maintained its agitation and propaganda among the Kurds at a relatively low key. It was felt that

25X1* [redacted] indicates that the 800-900 Kurds reported by the press as transiting the Suez Canal en route to Basra are followers of Mulla Mustapha.

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the USSR, while not neglecting to build up its assets among the Kurds, would view them primarily as a means of harassing and undermining Iran, probably in conjunction with or following other moves to create trouble for the Shah. In any event, the USSR would probably not want to exploit the Kurds in any manner inconsistent with its efforts first to secure control of Iraq. When and if the Soviets should decide to make use of the Kurds, whether to establish a "land bridge" across Iran or more generally to create disturbances within that country, it would probably be done primarily through the Kurds of Iraq rather than directly from the USSR.

g. It was generally agreed that Turkey and Iran would be unwilling to use Kurdish nationalism as a weapon against the Arabs for fear of stirring up trouble at home and that Nasser's identification with Arab nationalism would make it extremely difficult for him to woo the Iraqi Kurds.

3. We do not believe, on the basis of our discussion, that there is need for a formal estimate on the Kurds at this time. However, there was general agreement that the Kurdish problem would receive continuing close scrutiny by all ~~agencies~~ USIB agencies represented at the meeting, with particular emphasis on getting fuller reporting on conditions and attitudes.

25X1

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates

~~SECRET~~

Approved For Release 2006/10/31 : CIA-RDP79R00904A000500010091-8

Appendix E. ***Turkish Security Forces Arrest Kurdish Underground Leaders*** **(CIA-RDP79T00975A004800430001-1). (1959, December 21). Central Intelligence Bulletin; Central Intelligence Agency**

Approved for Release: 2020/02/21 C03007363

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

Turkish Security Forces Arrest Kurdish Underground Leaders

Thirty "key members" of a Kurdish underground organization in Turkey were arrested on 17 December, The action was ordered by Premier Menderes following four years of monitoring Kurdish activities by the security and police services.

Two of the Kurds were arrested in Diyarbakir, a Kurdish center in eastern Turkey, while the rest were detained in Istanbul and Ankara. Many were reported to be young university students. All 30, after being placed in jails in Istanbul by 20 December, will be tried for "engaging in activities dangerous to the security of the nation." A search of their homes revealed at least one document indicating a link with Iranian Communists, and one of the Kurds arrested is described by the Turkish official as a known Communist sympathizer.

The Turkish Government has imposed a press ban on all information related to the arrests beyond the fact that such action has been taken. Representatives of the press were informed, however, that the arrests involved a secret political organization "with foreign connections." With this treatment, the limited Kurdish organization could serve as a pretext for a general tightening of controls on domestic political opposition.

Ankara has always been extremely sensitive on matters involving the estimated 2,000,000 members of the Kurdish minority in Turkey. Officials frequently have denied publicly that there is a Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, maintaining that this minority has been assimilated into the Turkish nation. Reports

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of a movement for an autonomous Kurdistan have persisted, however, and some Turkish leaders privately concede that a problem exists.

While the Kurds hardly pose a serious threat to the security of a nation of 26,000,000, and in general are relatively inactive at present, they do present a potential target for Communist exploitation. This threat is largely countered at present by the apparent effectiveness of the Turkish security system and by the personal and tribal rivalries which exist throughout the Kurdish population.

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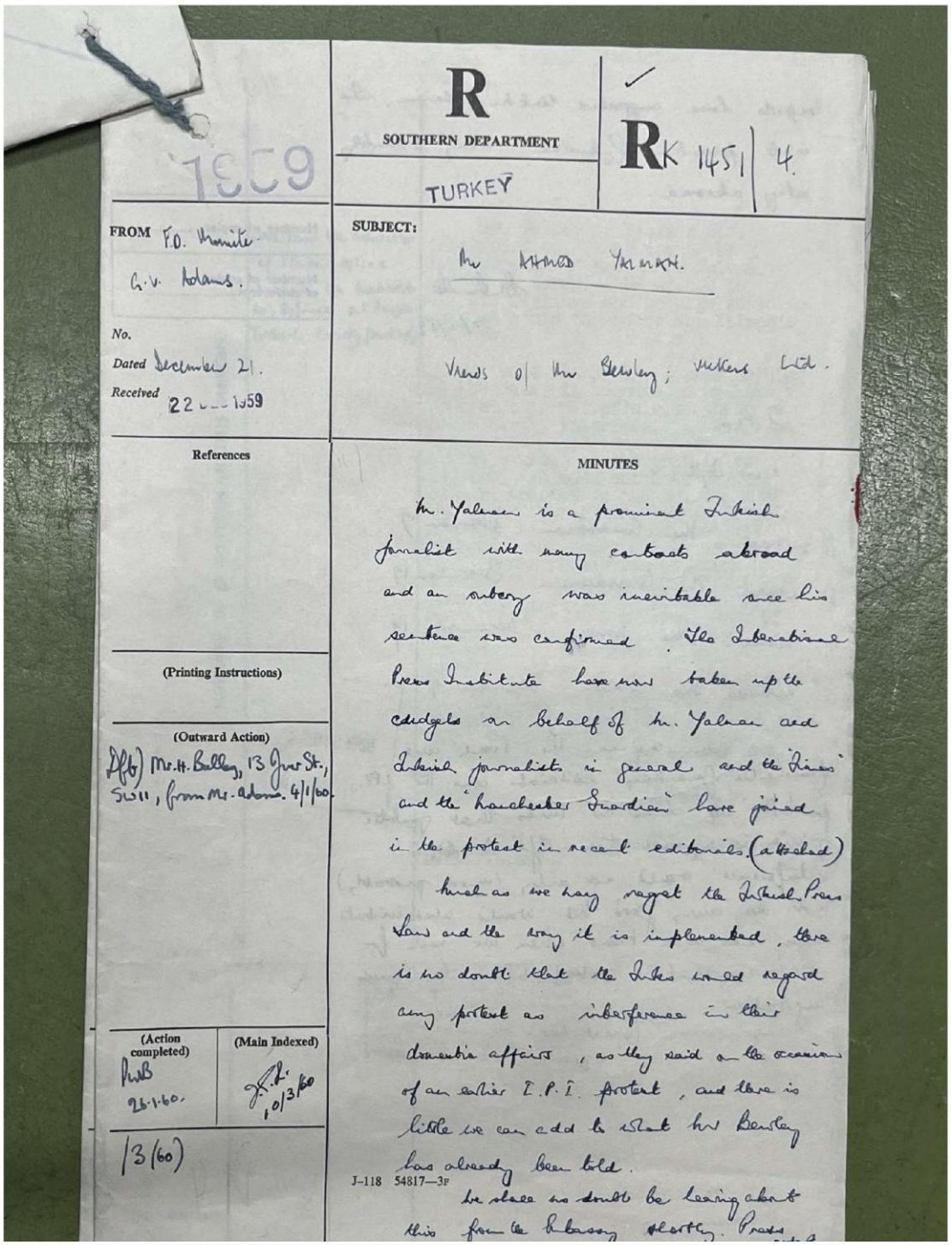
Approved for Release: 2020/02/21 C03007363

Appendix F. Adams, G. V. (1959, December 21). *Mr Ahmet Yalman* (FO 371/144790). The National Archives of the UK



R

SOUTHERN DEPARTMENT

TURKEY

RK 1451/4

FROM F.O. Minute
G.V. Adams.

No.

Dated December 21.

Received 22 ... 1959

SUBJECT:
Mr Ahmet Yalman.

Views of Mr Beckley; writers Ltd.

References

(Printing Instructions)

(Outward Action)
Aft) Mr. H. Bailey, 13 Jermyn St., SW11, from Mr. Adams. 4/1/60.

(Action completed)
PWB 26.1.60.

(Main Indexed)
J.F.T. 10/3/60

13(60)

MINUTES

Mr. Yalman is a prominent Turkish journalist with many contacts abroad and an enemy was inevitable once his sentence was confirmed. The International Press Institute have now taken up the cudgels on behalf of Mr. Yalman and Turkish journalists in general and the "Times" and the "Manchester Guardian" have joined in the protest in recent editorials. (attached)

Much as we may regret the Turkish Press Law and the way it is implemented, there is no doubt that the Turks would regard any protest as interference in their domestic affairs, as they said on the occasion of an earlier I.P.I. protest, and there is little we can add to what Mr Beckley has already been told.

J–118 54817—3F

We shall no doubt be hearing about this from the Embassy shortly. Press

reports have suggested that Mr. Yalman, who is at present in Pakistan, may possibly stay abroad.

Number of copies.....

Number of copies of enclosures.....

22/12/59.

I.P.D.

News Dept.

A) Extract The Guardian December 19

B) Extract The Guardian December 19

C) Extract The Times December 19

D) Extract The Times December 19.

I agree. The Times and Manchester Guardian editorials and the I.P.I. protest will show the Turks that public opinion is against them. Official H.M.G. intervention would not only (most probably) not do any good but would also irritate them, now at a time when we wish for close co-operation, particularly in the Cyprus negotiations.

Lancet Colo.
29/12

Number of copies.....

Number of copies of enclosures.....

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

(He rang the Minister of State's Office because he had seen Mr. Bowen at Anglo-Turkish Society function)

IN

22 DEC 1959

RK 1451/4.

Minutes.

Mr. Bewley of Vickers Ltd. telephoned on Friday about the imprisonment of Mr. Ahmed Yalman, editor of Vatan. He wished to air his feelings and to urge us to do what we could to secure Mr. Yalman's release.

2. I said that, while I knew nothing of the case, it sounded to me like a Turkish internal affair in which we could hardly interfere. I was then treated to a long account of Mr. Bewley's views on the principles involved (he made out that he was more interested in the principle of the thing than in Mr. Yalman himself, although he had, I think, met the latter on one occasion). He said that if the principles on which the Western alliance was founded had any meaning, we should be prepared to speak frankly to the Turks, even if this did mean courting a rebuff and an accusation of meddling in an internal affair.

3. Mr. Bewley wished to speak to someone at greater length about this, but I suggested that it would be better if he wrote. He accepted this.

G.V. Adams.

(G.V. Adams)
December 21, 1959.

Southern Dept.

On

M.F.P.

M.F.P.

earlier protest couched in moderate language was decisively turned away with the comment from the then Press Minister that no Turk could belong to an organisation which interfered in the country's

36283 (9370) A.O.St.

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

Minutes.

On December 21 I sent you a minute about Mr. Bulley of Vickers Ltd. who is concerned about the case of Mr. Yalman.

2. Mr. Bulley has now written. I attach his letter. I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply which I could send to Mr. Bulley.

G.V. Adams

(G. V. Adams)
December 23, 1959.

Mr. Smith

Southern Dept.

Please see earlier minutes on RK 1451/4 and Ankara's report on this case at RK 1451/5. The Article of the North Atlantic Treaty to which Mr Bulley refers is attached.

I attach a draft reply.

G.M.
31/12/59.

G. Adams

M.F.P.

earlier protest couched in moderate language was decisively turned away with the comment from the then Press Minister that no Turk could belong to an organisation which interfered in the country's

36283 (9370) A.O.St.

Appendix G. Cullen, A. P. (1959, February 9). *Cultural Association of Kurdish Students in Europe* (FO 1110/1259). The National Archives of the UK

When replying—address OUTSIDE envelope to :—
THE SECRETARY, BOX 500, PARLIAMENT STREET B.O., LONDON, S.W.1.
and NOT to any individual.

Telephone Nos. . . . REGENT 6050
WHITEHALL 6789

Telegraphic Address . . SNUFFBOX, LONDON.

BOX No. 500,
PARLIAMENT STREET B.O.,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Our Ref.: OF 1432/E.2/

Your Ref.:

RETURNED TO ARCHIVES 19 FEB 1959

R.172/2. /G

9th February 1959.

Dear Mr. Cullen,

With reference to our conversation yesterday, I enclose a note on the Cultural Association of Kurdish Students in Europe.

2. At present we have no trace of TASHSIN MOHAMMED AMIN but further enquiries are being made.

3. The publication of this organisation is produced in London, the first issue of which came out in March 1958. The contents are either written or type-written and the publication is then reproduced by duplicating aparatus.

Yours sincerely,

for

A.P. Cullen, Esq.
I.R.D.,
Foreign Office.

VPT
Enc: 1

THIS IS A COPY
THE ORIGINAL HAS BEEN RETAINED
IN THE DEPARTMENT UNDER SECTION
3(4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958

SECRET

SECRET

Cultural Association of Kurdish Students in Europe.

A Cultural Association of Kurdish Students in Europe was founded in Wiesbaden in Germany in 1956 with the following professed aims:-

i To strengthen the bonds between the Kurdish students in Europe and to arrange periodical meetings between them.
ii To establish mutual assistance between Kurdish students.
iii To take an interest in and develop Kurdish culture.
iv To acquaint the world with the culture of the Kurdish people, their country and their circumstances.
v To establish relations with various student organisation, national and international, and to co-operate with them within the limits of their common aims and interests.
vi To issue a periodical publication for the furtherance of these ends.

2. The Association has branches in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, with a total membership of about 100. The United Kingdom branch, which was also set up in 1956, has a membership of forty out of the fifty Kurdish students at present in this country. In addition to its objects listed above, it aims at close co-operation with the Iraqi Students' Society in the United Kingdom, which is communist-controlled, and the Arab Students' Union in the United Kingdom, in which the controlling elements at present are Ba'athists. It has recently been learnt that the United Kingdom branch of the Association is communist-penetrated. A leading member of the Iraqi Communist Group in this country is known to play an active role in its affairs, and its past and present secretary as well as the editor of its publication 'Kurdistan' are also known Communist sympathisers. No information is available about the activities of the branches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

SECRET

Appendix H. Hopson, D. C. (1959, April 6). *Kurdish Students Association in the U.K.* (FO 1110/1259). The National Archives of the UK

SECRET

Kurdish Students Association in the U.K.

Mr Ross's ~~your~~ minute of April 2 to Southern Department.

2. Baghdad Radio reported on January 21 that Tahsin Mohammed Amin, Secretary-General of the English Branch of the Kurdish Students' League in Europe, had sent a message of support to Prime Minister Qasim on the occasion of the League's seventh conference in London on December 27, 1958. The message said that the Kurds and Arabs now stood as a single bloc, and that the Kurdish students in England, together with their Arab brethren, were resolved to work for the public interest.

3. We made enquiries about the Kurdish students, who had not previously come to our notice, from the Security Service. They informed us that a Cultural Association of Kurdish Students in Europe was founded in Wiesbaden in Germany in 1956 with the following professed aims:-

i) to strengthen the bonds between the Kurdish students in Europe and to arrange periodical meetings between them;

ii) to establish mutual assistance between Kurdish students;

iii) to take an interest in and develop Kurdish culture;

iv) to acquaint the world with the culture of the Kurdish people, their country and their circumstances;

v) to establish relations with various student organisations, national and international, and to co-operate with them within the limits of their common aims and interests;

vi) to issue a periodical publication for the furtherance of these ends.

4. The Association has branches in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, with a total membership of about 100. The United Kingdom branch, which was also set up in 1956, has a membership of forty out of the fifty Kurdish students at present in this country. In addition to its objects listed above, its aims at close co-operation with the Iraqi Students Society in the United Kingdom and the Arab Students' Union, also in this country. It produces in London a duplicated publication, Kurdistan, the first issue of which appeared in March, 1958. We have no information about the activities of the branches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

5. The Security Service consider that the United Kingdom branch of the Kurdish Students' Association is Communist-penetrated; a leading member of the Iraqi Communist group in this country is known to play an active rôle in its affairs, and its past and present secretary as well as the editor of Kurdistan are also known Communist sympathisers. The Iraqi Students Society in the United Kingdom is under Communist control, though the Arab Students' Union is

not cleared

/predominantly ...

SECRET

predominantly Ba'athist. Tahsin Mohammed Amin, who sent the message to Baghdad, is not known to the Security Service, but they have promised to make further enquiries.

6. We have asked the Security Service for clearance for passing their information in paras. 2, 3 and 4 to the Turkish Ambassador, and will let Mr. Ross know as soon as we hear from them, ~~as it is from open sources~~.

D.C. Hopson

(D.C. Hopson)

April 6, 1959

Mr. A.D.M. Ross

Copied to: Sir R. Stevens

Eastern Department

Southern Department

P.S. We have now received Security Service clearance. All the information given above may be passed to the Turkish Ambassador with the exception of the sentence in square brackets in paragraph 5 which must be safeguarded.

Appendix I. Ross, A. D. M. (1959a, April 2). ***Cultural Association of Kurdish Students in Europe*** **(FO 1110/1259). The National Archives of the UK**

Number of copies

Number of copies of enclosures

7 - APR 1959

CONFIDENTIAL

~~EK 10100/13~~

In view of Mr Bowman's of 3/4 : PR

Mr Bowman PR

Mr. Brown 3/4

The Turkish Ambassador informed me this morning that he had received instructions from his Government to report on the existence of any so-called Kurdish Association in the United Kingdom. According to these instructions a Kurdish Students Association had met in Munich in January for the purpose of promoting Kurdish independence. In February another group was refused permission to hold a meeting in Baghdad, but the Muta Sarrif of one of the Northern Liwas of Iraq had given permission for the meeting to be held there. At the same time a meeting was said to have been held in London during February.

2. The Ambassador said that he had mentioned this matter to Sir R. Stevens who had apparently heard nothing of the sort. I told him that this was also the first that I had heard of any so-called Kurdish Association in the United Kingdom.

3. Apparently the Ambassador was being pressed for information by his Government and I therefore undertook to let him know whether in fact anything was known here on the subject.

4. Could enquiries please be made of the Home Office? Possibly I.R.D. may have come across these Kurdish Associations which, according to M. Birgi, seem to have been active in various foreign countries.

ADMR

(A.D.M. Ross)
April 2, 1959

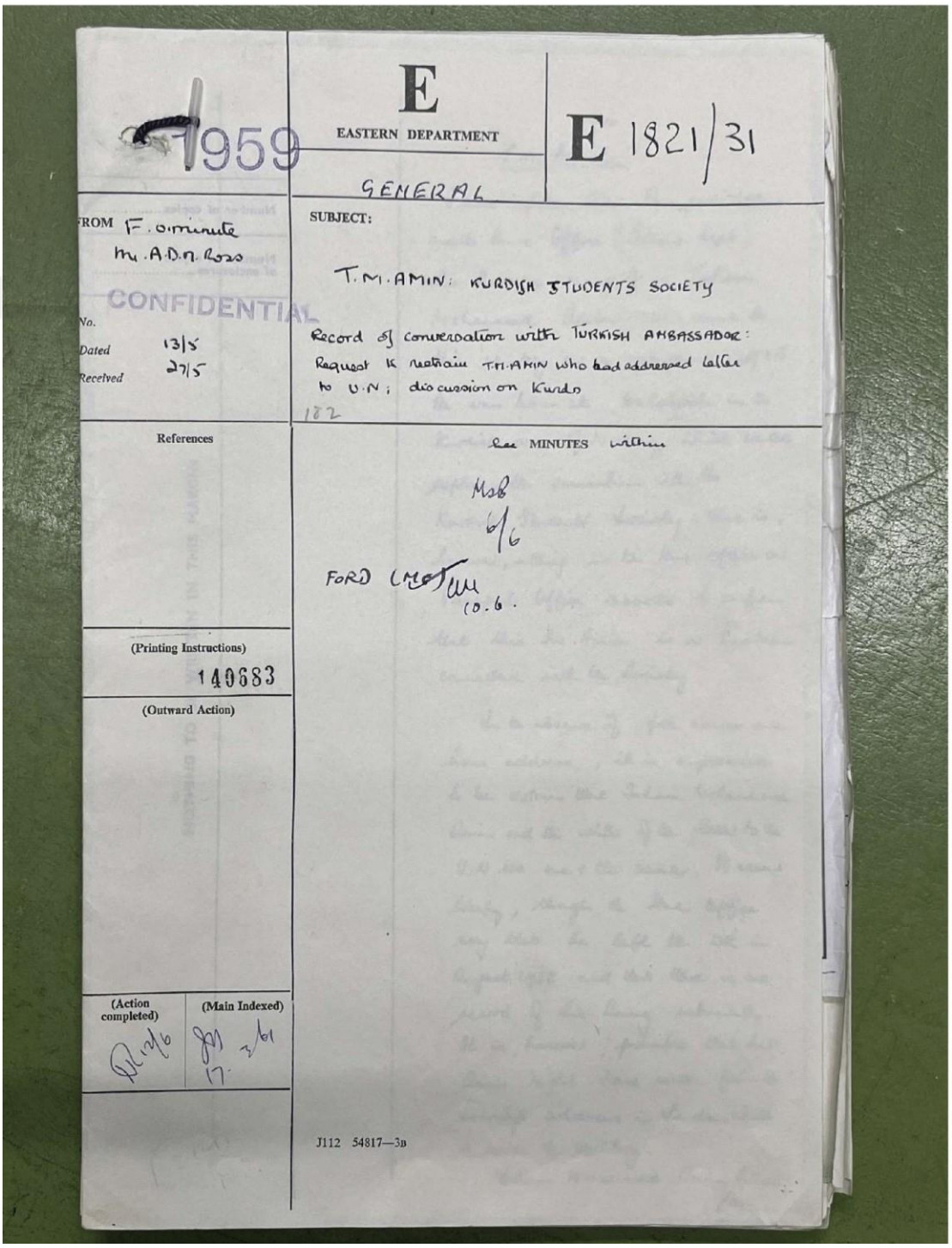
Southern Dept.

Copies to: Sir R. Stevens
I.R.D.
Eastern Dept.

I.R.D. have all the material on Kurdish activities in the U.K., and are submitting separately a minute to Mr. Ross.

C. T. Brown
3/4/59

Appendix J. Ross, A. D. M. (1959b, May 13). *T. M. Amin: Kurdish Students Society* (FO 371/140683). The National Archives of the UK



1959

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EASTERN DEPARTMENT

GENERAL

E 1821/31

FROM F. o. minute
Mr. A.D.M. Ross

CONFIDENTIAL

No.
Dated 13/5
Received 27/5

SUBJECT:

T.M. AMIN: KURDISH STUDENTS SOCIETY

Record of conversation with TURKISH AMBASSADOR: Request to restrain T.M. AMIN who had addressed letter to U.N.; discussion on Kurds

182

References

See MINUTES within

MSB 6/6

FORD 10.6.

(Printing Instructions)

140683

(Outward Action)

(Action completed)

(Main Indexed)

17. 3/61

J112 54817—3B

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

RECEIVED IN ARCHIVES
27 MAY 1959
E1821/31

Mr Barnes
Mr Smith
E
13/5

CONFIDENTIAL

The Turkish Ambassador called on me this morning. He said that as we had been so helpful in providing him with information about the "Kurdish" Students Society he had been asked to bring to our notice quite privately and unofficially the fact that the so-called Secretary of the United Kingdom Branch had written to the Secretary General of the United Nations about the alleged mal-treatment of Kurds in Turkey and Iran. The view of the Turkish Delegation to the United Nations was that a letter of this sort could not be discussed and that the Turkish and Iranian Governments were not obliged to take any notice of it. The Turkish Government were in touch with the Iranian Government, but it had occurred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Foreign Office might possibly be able to prevent Mr. Amin from indulging in further activities of this nature.

2. Speaking personally I replied that I thought it very unlikely that we could take any action against Mr. Amin on account of the letter which he had written to the Secretary General which did not seem to me to bring him into conflict with the laws, regulations and traditions of the United Kingdom. I also put it to the Ambassador that, assuming that Mr. Amin had committed no offence, any approach to him by the United Kingdom authorities might do more harm than good. I am glad to say that the Ambassador entirely agreed with me. I promised further to let him know what nationality Mr. Amin possessed. (If he were a Turk, the Turkish Government could presumably make it impossible for him to stay in this country, though neither M. Birgi nor I mentioned this possibility.)

3. In a general discussion about the Kurds, M. Birgi pointed out that the problem and its solution varied in the three countries concerned but that in every case the stimulus from outside was much greater than from within. In Iran, the Russians were working for an independent Kurdish state. In Iraq, the tactics were to attach the Kurds more firmly to Baghdad in order later to be able to bring in the Kurds of Iran and Turkey. In the last named country, the policy was simply to make difficulties between the Kurds and the Government by playing on supposed grievances. M. Birgi mentioned that what was happening now was really the result of past mistakes both on the part of the European countries, who had stimulated the Kurdish movement, and on the part of the Turkish Government for example, who had mal-treated or neglected the Kurds. But he seemed not greatly concerned at the possibilities of their making serious trouble today at least insofar as his own country was concerned. He emphasised that the Kurdish movement was much stronger outside the area than inside.

(A.D.M. Ross)
May 13, 1959

Southern Dept.

Copy to: Sir F. Hoyer Millar
Eastern Dept.
U.N. Dept.

4

Nat 7

1- The Secretary of the United Kingdom Branch of "the Kurdish Students' Society in Europe", Mr. T.M. Amin (c/o 37, King Street, London, W.C.2) have sent a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The copy of this letter is attached.

2- It is obvious that such a "démarché" cannot be a subject of discussion for the Members of the United Nations in the "Commission of Human Rights" and interested countries are not bound to reply to such a "démarche".

3- We would appreciate very much if such kind of activities could be prevented.

-5-

Appendix K. Walmsley, A. R. (1957, August 31). ***Pacification and Settlement of the Iraqi Tribes Between the Two World Wars*** **(FO 371/126889). The National Archives of the UK**

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN.

CONFIDENTIAL

Minutes.

EA1015/411

PACIFICATION AND SETTLEMENT OF IRAQI TRIBES BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

During the present discussions about the future of Muscat and Oman it has been suggested that the Iraqis might be able to give the Sultan valuable advice, based on their own experience, about methods of pacifying, settling and administering tribes in the interior. Unfortunately, the Iraqis' support of the Arab League initiative in the Security Council has prejudiced the Sultan against them and it seems doubtful at present whether the Iraqis can be directly asked.

2. Mr. Beeley has asked that meanwhile we should look for whatever information is available in London about this particular subject. We should be very grateful if Air Commodore Buss could take this on.

3. No time limit has been set but I think that if results could be produced within a week ~~or ten days~~ it would be much appreciated.

A.R. Walmsley

(A.R. Walmsley)
August 31, 1957

Air Commodore Buss, F.O.R.D

I think have replying a note to close record
K.B. Buss. 9.IX.57

H Walmsley I have asked Air Cdre Buss if he can expand the very interesting last page*. ARW 10/9

Evelyn Dyke

* Expansion now attached.

D.P.W. 51-7837

Pacification and Settlement of the 'Iraqi tribes

Any examination of the problems faced and the methods adopted by the 'Iraqi Government to pacify, settle and administer their tribes to be of use as a guide to the solution of the problem facing the Sultan of Muscat must be limited to consideration of those tribes whose way of life and attitude towards the Government most closely resemble those of the tribes of Inner 'Oman, most of whom have come to regard themselves as entitled to be regarded as partially if not wholly independent of the Sultan.

Application of this principle rules out the Arab tribes of Iraq, nomadic or settled. The nomads have caused no anxiety for thirty years or more since the problems of the partial defection of the Dhafir to ibn Sa'ud, the doubtful loyalty of the Dahamshah to 'Iraq and the difficulty caused by Shammar refugees from Sa'udi Arabia were settled. Restlessness amongst the settled tribes of the Middle Euphrates was endemic and was caused by "the rancour of never-settled land disputes, the fear and hatred of conscription, the maladroit or corrupt administration" and the age-old opposition of Shiah tribes, often instigated by fanatical mullahs of Najaf and Karbala', to being ruled by a Sunni government. But even their most violent outbreaks were little more than demonstrations of discontent and had no truly separatist implications. Thus the causes of disaffection in the Middle Euphrates offer no parallel to the situation in 'Oman and the savage measures employed by the 'Iraq Army in 1935 and 1936 in suppressing it provide no pattern to follow.

The Kurdish problem is outwardly - and to a large extent, genuinely - one of race and language; but, basically, its existence stems from the reluctance of an inaccessible tribal society to lose its independence and form its ability effectively to resist attempts to impose the rule of a central government

upon

upon it. By the employment of Kurdish officials and the Kurdish language (to which 'Iraq was committed on entry into the League of Nations) the government for a generation past has done something to remove these obstacles to peaceful control. But pockets of tribal resistance persisted until, in 1945 under pressure from the Army and other subsidized Kurdish tribes, Mulla Mustafa of Barzan, the last of the rebel barons fled to Persia and thence to the U.S.S.R. A strong "nationalist" feeling amongst the intellectuals and amongst town-dwellers within and without the Kurdish provinces undoubtedly exists and is stimulated by communist propaganda but, though the same sentimental attachment to Kurdish nationalism is found amongst the tribal leaders their main concern has been with the age-old privileges which freedom from all forms of governmental control has given them. Thus, to them, the separatist movement, which has caused anxiety to the Iraq Government ever since its formation, means to the tribes not so much the creation of a purely Kurdish administration as a return to the conditions of anarchy which they enjoyed in the days of the Ottoman Empire. (Incidentally, until the idea of a separate Kurdish State was propounded in the abortive Treaty of Sèvres (1920) Turkish sovereignty over the Kurdish districts was unquestioned although administrative control had for very many years been spasmodic and precarious. The Treaty of Lausanne and the frontier settlement which followed confirmed Iraqi sovereignty over the disputed provinces although no effective administration existed at that time over a large part of them).

Thus, ignoring the racial and linguistic factors, the problem which faced the Iraqi Government in bringing the turbulent and inaccessible Kurdish tribes under control had much in common with that facing the Sultan of Muscat to day although it has been simplified by the lack of cooperation

between

between the tribal leaders themselves. Their failure to cooperate during the period between 1930 and 1945, enabled the Government to suppress - though not always without some difficulty - local outbreaks which were bids for individual freedom from control rather than true demonstrations of nationalistic fervour. At the same time there were economic grievances which were expressed by Majīd Mustafa, the Kurdish Deputy for Sulaimaniya, who made a special investigation in January 1945, as not a demand for independence but for their issues of sugar and tea.

Since that date much has been done, and the Kurds have had a fair share in the general expansion of the national economy which has taken place in 'Iraq since the conclusion of the oil agreement of 1952, both directly and indirectly. The extension of metalled roads to all major towns (the roads in Kurdistan are amongst the best in the country) has speeded up the administration of justice and the enforcement of public security. Major development projects sited in Kurdistan have had a settling effect by giving employment. Improved social services and a significant increase in the number of schools in the Kurdish districts have also followed the Government's wise handling of their oil revenues.

It is important to note that little or no progress was made until the major foci of resistance were neutralised. The opening up of communications had made it possible to maintain peaceful conditions, to carry out development works and to extend social and educational services. The process in 'Iraq has been spread over about 25 years and it is only since money from the Development Board has been available that what it is hoped may be a foundation of permanent peace has been laid.